

WEST EUROPEAN PRIME MINISTERS

Edited by

G. W. JONES



FRANK CASS

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30. R.B. Andeweg and M. Burch, *Decision-Making Structures and Procedures, a Report on Findings*, paper presented to the Research Group on Decision-Making in West European Cabinets, European University Institute, Florence, 1987, p. 5.
31. All these figures are from R. B. Andeweg, 'Tweeëtel Minister: Besluitvorming in Nederlandse Kabinetten' in R. B. Andeweg (ed.), *Ministers en Ministeraard* (The Hague: SDU, 1990), p. 20.
32. This Latin description of a prime minister's position is attributed to Sir William Harcourt. Cf. Ivor Jennings, *Cabinet Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, third edition, 1959), p. 200.
33. H. Dooyeweerd, *De Ministeraard in het Nederlandsche Staatsrecht* (Amsterdam: Van Soest, 1917), p. 167. Most of the information about the position of the prime minister before 1917 presented here comes from this source.
34. For the development of the Prime Minister's position in this period, see: E. van Raalte, *De Ontwikkeling van het Minister-Prezidentschap in Nederland, België, Frankrijk, Engeland en enige andere Landen* (Leiden: Leyden University Press, 1954), pp. 1-86.
35. Occasionally prime ministers still take on departmental tasks, but only as an interim solution.
36. He is no longer elected by his colleagues, but appointed by the monarch. This method is no longer controversial, as the nomination of the prime minister is now part of the negotiations between the potential governing parties, and the royal appointment has become a formality.
37. For a different view on many of the factors to be mentioned below, see Van den Berg, *op. cit.*
38. W. K. N. Schmelzer in Robbert Ammerlaan, *Het Verschijnsel Schmelzer* (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1973), p. 241 (my translation).
39. The position is less clear in the smaller conservative Liberal party (VVD). When in government, the result has sometimes been rivalry between its parliamentary party leader and its deputy prime minister.
40. Bakema and Secker, *op. cit.*, p. 161.
41. Interview and translation by the author.
42. Quoted in Van Tijn and Van Wezel, *op. cit.*, pp. 90-91 (my translation).
43. Cf. W. K. N. Schmelzer, 'Minister-Prezident en Buitenlands Beleid', in W. van Drimmelen *et al.* (eds.), *Voor de Eenheid van Beland* (The Hague: Staatsuitgeverij, 1987), pp. 183-98.
44. Interview and translation by the author.
45. *Proceedings of the Second Chamber of Parliament*, 1978-1979, Appendix 15424, No. 1 (my translation).
46. Quoted in R. J. Hoekstra, *De Ministeraard in Nederland* (Zwolle: Tjeenk Willink, 1983), p. 43.
47. As is claimed by, for example, A. H. M. Dölle and J. W. M. Engels, 'De Affaire-Brinkman: symposium van de vijfzende ster van de Minister-Prezident', *Tijdschrift voor Openbaar Bestuur*, Vol. 10 (1984), pp. 411-16.
48. R. B. Andeweg, 'King' in *Parliament: Anthony King's modes of executive-legislative relations redefined and applied to the Dutch Parliament*, paper presented to the ECPR joint sessions of workshops, Bochum, 2-7 April 1990, pp. 7-9.
49. This argument has become known as 'Ringaldá's Law', after the former Permanent Secretary of the Department of General Affairs who first formulated it. Cf. Van Drimmelen *et al.* (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp. 258-61.
50. Interview and translation by the author.
51. José Taitkens, *Schip en Werkelijkheid van het Bezuiningsbeleid 1975-1986* (Deventer: Kluwer, 1988), pp. 191-2.

An Taoiseach: The Irish Prime Minister

Brendan O'Leary

There have been seven *Taoisigh* since the office of *An Taoiseach* (the prime minister) was created in Ireland's 1937 Constitution: Éamon de Valera, John A. Costello, Seán Lemass, Jack Lynch, Liam Cosgrave, Charles Haughey and Garret FitzGerald. The predecessor of the office of *An Taoiseach* was the Presidency of the Executive Council, established under independent Ireland's first Constitution of 1922, a post held by two people William T. Cosgrave (1922-32) and de Valera (1932-37). Thus independent Ireland has had eight prime ministers since 1922: a small number, and a low turnover-rate. All eight have been males: hence the gender-specific designations 'he/his' will be used throughout. All have been Roman Catholics. Four of them were related: Liam Cosgrave was William's son, whereas Haughey is married to Lemass's daughter. Two were the sons of nationalist revolutionaries who had been ministers: Cosgrave junior and FitzGerald. One of the eight, de Valera, was *Taoiseach* for 21 years, and was president between 1959 and 1973. His charismatic status, by comparison with his successors, is captured by the assessment that, after he ceased to be prime minister, 'Henceforward, there might emerge as leaders brusque bosses, or genial avuncular pipe-smokers, or earnest barristers, or amiable dons or ambitious accountants but never again a Messiah.'¹ The caustic portraits of de Valera's successors sketched in the preceding sentence refer, in consecutive order of condescension, to Lemass, Lynch, Cosgrave, FitzGerald and Haughey.

The periods of tenure and party-affiliation of Ireland's prime ministers are shown in Table 1.2 To date every leader of Fianna Fáil has become *Taoiseach*: de Valera, Lemass, Lynch and Haughey. By contrast three leaders of Fine Gael, the second contender in the Irish party system, never became prime minister: Eoin O'Duffy (1933-34), Richard Mulcahy (1944-59) and James Dillon (1959-66). Under Mulcahy's leadership Fine Gael was the largest partner in two coalition governments, but because of his role in the Irish Civil War and his past Blueshirt enthusiasms³ he was not an acceptable *Taoiseach* to one of his party's coalition partners. The president of Fine Gael therefore served as a cabinet minister under his colleague Costello.

Ireland's prime ministers have presided over single-party majority, single-party minority and coalition governments (Table 1). Fianna Fáil is the sole party to have had its nominee for *Taoiseach* sustained by an *electéd*⁴ working majority in *Dáil Éireann*. It has won seven general elections outright and held office as a majority government for nearly 32 years. It is also the solitary party since 1932 able to sustain itself as a single party

TABLE 1
IRISH PRIME MINISTERS (SEPTEMBER 1922–JULY 1989)

Date of Appointment	Government	Prime Minister (party)	Single Party Majority	Single Party Minority	Coalition
September 1922	Pro-Treaty ¹	Cosgrave(CnG)	1 year ²		
September 1923	Cumann na nGaedheal	Cosgrave(CnG)	3 years, 9 months ³		
June 1927	Cummann na nGaedheal	Cosgrave(CnG)		4 months	
October 1927	Cumann na nGaedheal	Cosgrave(CnG)		4 years, 5 months ⁴	
March 1932	Fianna Fáil	de Valera (FF)		11 months	
February 1933	Fianna Fáil	de Valera(FF)	4 years, 5 months		
July 1937	Fianna Fáil	de Valera(FF)		11 months	
June 1938	Fianna Fáil	de Valera(FF)	5 years		
July 1943	Fianna Fáil	de Valera(FF)		11 months	
June 1944	Fianna Fáil	de Valera(FF)	3 years, 8 months		
February 1948	Inter-Party ⁵	Costello(FG)			3 years, 4 months
June 1951	Fianna Fáil	de Valera(FF)		3 years	
June 1954	Inter-Party ⁶	Costello(FG)			2 years, 10 months
March 1957	Fianna Fáil	de Valera/Lemass(FF)	4 years, 7 months,		
October 1961	Fianna Fáil	Lemass(FF)		3 years, 6 months	
April 1965	Fianna Fáil(50% seats)	Lemass/Lynch(FF)	4 years, 3 months		
July 1969	Fianna Fáil	Lynch(FF)	3 years, 8 months		
March 1973	Coalition(FG/Lab)	Cosgrave(FG)			4 years, 4 months
July 1977	Fianna Fáil	Lynch/Huaghey(FF)	4 years, 4 months		
June 1981	Coalition(FG/Lab)	FitzGerald(FG)			8 months
March 1982	Fianna Fáil	Huaghey(FF)			9 months
December 1982	Coalition(FG/Lab)	FitzGerald(FG)			4 years, 3 months
March 1987	Fianna Fáil	Huaghey(FF)		2 year, 3 months	
June 1989	Fianna Fáil/PDs	Haughey(FF)			(-)
Total			34 years, 8 months	17 years, 1 month	15 years, 5 months

- 1 Governing party calls itself Cumann na nGaedheal in Spring 1923.
- 2 Government majority due to the fact that the largest opposition party (sinn Féin) refused to take its seats.
- 3 Government majority due to the fact the largest opposition party (Sinn Féin, later Fianna Fáil) refused to take its seats.
- 4 Cumann na nGaedheal had the support of the Farmers' Party (later absorbed into Cumann na nGaedheal). In 1930 the government resigned after a parliamentary defeat but was immediately renominated.
- 5 All parties (Fine Gael, Labour, National Labour, Clann na Poblachta, Clann na Talmhan and Independents).
- 6 A coalition of Fine Gael, the Labour Party and Clann na Talmhan.

minority government. Moreover, until July 1989, Fianna Fáil had never been required to form a coalition in order to participate in government.⁵ The 'partnership for government' with the Progressive Democrats made Haughey the first Fianna Fáil *Taoiseach* to lead a coalition government. He is also, thus far, the solitary Fianna Fáil leader to have failed to win his party a parliamentary majority. Fianna Fáil's grip on the prime ministership is therefore comparable with that of the Conservatives in twentieth-century British politics, but is more remarkable since it has been accomplished within a multi-party system and under a relatively proportional election system (STV).

The only other party to have held the office of *Taoiseach* is Fine Gael. On all five occasions its nominee has headed a coalition government. Its lack of ability to govern on its own contrasts strikingly with its predecessor Cumann na nGaedheal. Three electoral facts demonstrate Fine Gael's weakness: none of its *Taoisigh* have subsequently won a general election campaign which would have enabled their party to share government with parties other than Fianna Fáil; on only one occasion, 1951, has a Fine Gael *Taoiseach* entered an election contest and increased the number of seats held by his party; and two of the Fine Gael-led coalitions were minority governments.

RESEARCH ON THE IRISH PRIME MINISTER

Sceptics may wonder whether much can be said by a political scientist about eight holders of an office. Such cynicism would be reinforced by the relative dearth of historical or analytical work on the roles, competences and performances of Irish prime ministers. Thus far only one political scientist has specialised in the study of the *Taoisearch*, and his very reliable general study is almost 20 years old⁶ – although he has since produced a full-scale study of Lemass.⁷ Just one book exists on cabinet government in Ireland, and it is 17 years old.⁸ There are several scholarly studies or biographies of de Valera, but thus far there exist merely 'pop-journalistic' studies of recent prime ministers, such as FitzGerald⁹ and Haughey. Only two former cabinet ministers have published diaries or accounts of their time in office.¹⁰ FitzGerald will be the first *Taoisearch* to write his memoirs, due for publication in 1991.¹¹ He is also the least reticent of former prime ministers in talking about his tenure of office. Haughey has attracted muck-taking and hagiography, but no heavyweight study; and he has been reluctant to be interviewed on his style and decision-making in government.¹²

Furthermore, two 'British diseases' obstruct the study of the Irish *Taoisearch*. First, Ireland inherited a tradition of official secrecy, especially with regard to the operations of cabinet government and the policy advice rendered to the prime minister by senior civil servants. Access to government minutes, even after 30 years, is problematic; and they are unhelpful, as they record decisions but not dissentient opinions. Such difficulties are compounded in the case of Costello's first inter-party government which because of MacBride's suspicions chose to operate without the services of the senior civil servant, the Secretary to the

Government. However, such obstacles may be receding in importance: the professionalism of Irish history has increased significantly, and its practitioners have improved government record-keeping; whereas Irish journalism has developed a more interrogative stance towards the executive in the 1970s and 1980s. Second, the Anglocentric bias of the academic literature may have unduly influenced Irish reflection on the office of the *Taoiseach*. The workings of Irish cabinet ministers have been described as 'more British than the British themselves',¹³ and the bulk of the literature unselfconsciously treats the Irish prime minister as a minor sibling of big sister in Westminster. Although the Irish premiership is a variant of the Westminster model it might be more profitably compared with premierships in other small states, such as New Zealand.

WHAT ARE THE DOMINANT IMAGES OF THE IRISH PRIME MINISTER?

Two proverbial and antonymic images are deployed to describe either the personalities or the roles of prime ministers in liberal democracies. The first contrasts the personalities of 'strong' and 'weak' prime ministers; the second the institutional roles of monocratic and collective executive leaderships. In the UK the allegedly sophisticated way of settling the merits of these images is to suggest that under 'strong' personalities 'prime-ministerial' government of a 'presidential' kind will displace collegial 'cabinet government' as the key locus of executive decision-making, whereas under 'weak' prime ministers the converse proposition will hold. In Ireland the analogous debate centres on the contrast between the *Taoiseach* as 'chief' (which is the literal meaning of the Gaelic designation of the prime minister) or 'chairman' of the government.¹⁴

However, in Ireland, by comparison with Britain, there is no evidence of a social scientific or ideological debate beyond this binary contrast. Organisation theory has not been applied to the study of Irish central government. Irish studies of public administration and public policy are not extensively developed, and there is no well-developed policy-sector or policy-network focus on the operations of the core executive. In the ideological arena there is no thriving left-wing tradition which portrays Irish prime ministers as puppets of the civil service, nor a corresponding right-wing tradition which portrays public policy outcomes as the by-product of budget-maximising bureaucrats.

The almost complete absence of these ideological traditions is easily explained. First, Ireland has never had a left-wing prime minister who has had the opportunity to betray the expectations of socialist activists. The closest approximation to such conspiratorial 'thinking' is found among republicans who portray Irish prime ministers as puppets of British imperialism. Second, Ireland has never had a New Right government; and it was not characterised by budgetary expansion before the 1960s. When the state grew thereafter it was favoured by the bulk of the political class – making it difficult for them to blame bureaucrats. Third, the Irish civil service is relatively self-effacing by contrast with its Whitehall relatives, partly because it lacks the same historic pedigree.¹⁵ Such self-effacement

reinforces the self-portraits of senior Irish politicians: 'A politician in Ireland is expected to be a tough administrator. They regard that role as one of the purposes of the national revolution establishing the state . . . There is an innate suspicion of bureaucracy that is a direct carry-over from the British days, because Dublin Castle was a highly centralised administrative bureaucracy'.¹⁶ Finally, given that Ireland is a small state there is a relative under-institutionalisation of the core executive, which makes ideological theories of bureaucratism predominance much less credible.

The 'chairman' image of the Irish prime minister is most likely to be articulated by the *Taoiseach*¹⁷ and civil servants in the *Taoiseach's* department.¹⁸ The prime minister chairs meetings of the Government (the equivalent of the cabinet in other liberal democracies, and distinguished here by an upper-case G; both terms, Government with a capital G and cabinet, are used interchangeably hereafter). The Government is the apex of the parliamentary system, fusing legislative and executive power, and is collectively responsible to *Dáil Éireann*. Its ministers are also individually responsible to *Dáil Éireann*, and are expected to enjoy some degree of autonomy in the management of their departments. Prime ministers are limited by political and managerial constraints in their choice of ministers. Politically they are sometimes regarded as being subject to 'regional constraints' in their choice of ministers, to ensure that the Government is geographically broadly based, and required to respect a 'pecking' order in the allocation of politically significant posts. Managerially, the prime minister has to choose 30 government and junior ministers from the limited pool of fewer than 90 deputies who support him. At least half of these deputies will be unsuitable for office on grounds of youth, unwillingness to serve, administrative incompetence, or emergent (or fully-blown) senility. In this image of the Irish Government the prime minister is seen as a constitutionally and politically constrained central co-ordinator, *primus inter pares*, a curial rather than papal figure, a chairman of his ministerial colleagues.

Anecdotal evidence can be cited in support of the chairman image.¹⁹ It was how the first Irish prime minister retrospectively presented himself. Intervening in the *Dáil* debate on the new Irish Constitution in 1937, Cosgrave argued that ministerial independence must be protected from a too assertive prime minister: 'In this new Constitution . . . the Prime Minister has been given pre-eminent power and position. In theory, a case may be made for the exaltation of the Prime Minister as distinct from other ministers of state . . . [But in my view] Ministers ought to possess security and a measure of independence.'²⁰ However, de Valera riposted that the new Constitution and the new post of *Taoiseach* merely codified existing practice; and aspects of de Valera's style of ministerial management conformed to the chairman image. He was sparing in his use of the *Taoiseach's* powers to dismiss ministers, forcing only six resignations or non-reinstatements in 21 years.²¹ He consulted among his ministers before calling general elections; and always sought the unity of his cabinet rather than resort to votes to decide policy questions. This latter insistence led to his obtaining agreement at cabinet by the 'force of physical exhaustion';

and in consequence some of the later de Valera administrations moved very slowly, 'at the pace of the last man to be convinced.'²² Less surprisingly the *Taoiseach* in the Fine Gael-headed coalition governments have been portrayed as chairmen. One of Cosgrave's ministers described his cabinet style as one of 'quiet authority'; another, asked what he thought of that agreed that he was 'quiet, certainly.'²³ One of FitzGerald's ministers described his cabinet management more flatteringly: 'At the Cabinet table Garret was unfailingly gentlemanly... His strongest word to convey disapproval of one's actions was "unhelpful"... His concern to reach consensus on the issues facing Government meant that our Cabinet meetings were much longer than was comfortable.'²⁴

The 'chief' image of the Irish prime minister is most frequently attributed to Fianna Fáil prime ministers. Here the emphasis is placed upon the constitutional transformation of 1937 which created the office of *Taoiseach*, and entrenched its incumbent's right to hire and fire ministers. Moreover, it is said that de Valera's 16 years as *Taoiseach*, and the norm of single-party government under the famed quasi-military discipline of the Fianna Fáil parliamentary party served to entrench prime ministerial predominance in the Irish political system – at least under Fianna Fáil governments. Furthermore it is argued that even under coalition governments certain developments have increased the political salience of the *Taoiseach* compared with other ministers: the growth of big government, and the enhanced need for the *Taoiseach*'s department to play a co-ordinating role in promoting economic management and development; the nodality of the *Taoiseach* in foreign affairs, especially in the European Community and the management of Anglo-Irish relations; and finally, the functional requirements of modern broadcasting media which dictate the personalisation of political leadership, especially in a milieu characterised by competitive elections.

Anecdotal evidence can also be marshalled in support of the chief image. The alleged regional constraint on ministerial selection is unproven. Cosgrave senior, despite the gloss he offered on his leadership in the *Dáil* statement quoted above, was regarded as 'the boss' by his colleagues; and his protestations to the contrary when in opposition can be read as political point-scoring. De Valera's dominance of his team is difficult to dispute, and he was known throughout his party as 'the Chief'.²⁵ Both Lemass and Haughey won from their admirers and detractors the ambiguous sobriquet of 'the boss'. Lynch proved capable of being the first *Taoiseach* to dismiss powerful ministerial colleagues and rivals, including Haughey, during the 'arms crisis' of 1969–70. Even a coalition leader, like FitzGerald, has been able to use the *Taoiseach*'s office to launch and pursue major political initiatives, such as the New Ireland Forum of 1983–84, and the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, against the express reluctance of his cabinet colleagues.²⁶ Sackings of junior ministers, appointments of close friends and supporters to key ministerial positions, and resignations of enemies and rivals have become more frequent in the last two decades. Haughey's first two periods of office (1979–81, 1982) gave considerable impetus to the charge that the *Taoiseach*'s department had become 'presidentialised'.

EVALUATING THE RIVAL IMAGES OF CHIEF OR CHAIRMAN

It would therefore be easy to foresee an Irish debate paralleling the wearisome controversy in the UK as to whether or not cabinet government has been displaced by prime-ministerial government. Supporters of the orthodox 'chairman' image can point to the political constraints operating upon 'boss-minded' individuals like Haughey, whose recent style of cabinet management (1987–) appears to have been changed by the chastening experience of party-revolts and electoral defeat in 1982. Proponents of the media-favoured 'chief' image can riposte by suggesting that functional demands operating on premiers in all Westminster-model democracies are at work, increasing the autonomy of prime ministers, including those at the head of coalitions, like FitzGerald – of whom it has been said that he exercised [a] decisive authority in selecting his governmental team and [b] in weighting it deliberately in favour of his own supporters within the party'.²⁷

Such debate would import the confusion evident in the British (and other national) literature between roles and personalities, and the characteristic refusal of each school of thought to specify decisive criteria of confirmation or falsification for the theses being advanced. However, three disciplines and five methods are available to evaluate the worth of such contesting conceptions of prime minister, or indeed transcend the framework imposed by such binary clichés. First, we can engage in constitutional or legal analysis of the role of the *Taoiseach*. Second, we can engage in historical analysis, treat each of the prime ministers in turn, and draw inductive conclusions. Finally, we can use the disciplines of political science. Here there are three relevant methods: (i) decision-making case-studies, (ii) explanatory models which draw upon typologies of core executive decision-making and upon organisation theory, and (iii) party-government models.

CONSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS OF THE STATUS OF IRISH PRIME MINISTERS²⁸

Unlike their British counterparts Irish prime ministers have had their roles defined in three constitutions. The Constitution of *Dáil Éireann*, drafted in 1919 at the outset of the war of independence, created the structures of British cabinet government. Parliamentary procedures and standing orders also revealed 'an almost total acceptance of the British pattern of legislative-executive relations.'²⁹ Attempts to establish a President of the Republic who would also be the prime minister, and to create powerful legislative committees on the lines of the American republic, were rejected. Irish republicanism in its first constitution had decided upon a parliamentary system modelled on that of Westminster.

The second, and lengthier, Constitution of 1922 was obliged to compromise republican nostrums with membership of the British commonwealth of nations. However, it was much more explicit in its attempt to make Irish cabinet government deviate from the British model. This ambition is evident in its articulation of 'Swiss' procedures and institutions designed to prevent strong cabinets from dominating Parliament and the

general citizenry. There were to be not less than five and not more than seven members of the Executive Council (Article 51). Provisions were made for up to five 'extern ministers', i.e. non-cabinet technocratic ministers who need not have been elected politicians, and would be chosen by and responsible to the *Dáil* (Article 55). Such ministers could not be removed from office 'otherwise than by *Dáil Éireann* itself, and then for stated reasons' (Article 56). The Constitution also embedded provisions for referenda, including the right of popular initiative, as well as containing procedures for strengthening the powers of the *Oireachtas* (the two houses of Parliament). The STV electoral system also maximised the probability of a multi-party assembly as a constraint on executive authority. The constitutional designers of *Saorstát Éireann* (the Irish Free State) obviously intended that the Irish core executive would deviate from its British ancestor in its degree of parliamentary and popular accountability.

However, their aspirations were not wholly met. The state was born in civil war, and the losers absented themselves from the *Dáil* during the first years of state-building. The core executive, under Cumann na nGaedheal, therefore acquired more political autonomy than the constitutional designers had envisaged. The provisions for 'extern' ministers were used to appoint politicians rather than technocrats, and were soon abandoned. The prospect of popular initiative for a referendum was removed by constitutional amendment. For most of the 1920s the Executive Council was able to act rather like a British cabinet. However, the constitution appeared to work as intended with the President of the Executive Council *vis-à-vis* his cabinet colleagues. The power of dissolution was vested in the Executive Council as a whole (and a Council defeated in the *Dáil* was prohibited from demanding a dissolution). The president was required to submit the names of his Executive Council to the *Dáil* for their approval; and he was subject to maxima and minima in his choice of ministers. It was also understood that the Constitution implied that the dismissal of ministers was a function of the entire Executive Council rather than its president.

The Irish Constitution of 1937 was explicitly intended by de Valera to make the new *Taoiseach* more powerful than the President of the Executive Council, and similar in status to a British prime minister *vis-à-vis* his cabinet colleagues. Article 28 of *Bunreacht na hÉireann* defines the government, and empowers it with the executive power of the state, subject to the provisions of the Constitution. It specifies that the *Taoiseach* is head of the Government (Article 28.5.10), and that the Government shall consist of not less than seven and not more than 15 ministers. The *Taoiseach* nominates these ministers (Article 13.1.20), and may dismiss them 'for reason which seem to him sufficient' (Article 28.9.40). The president is required to accept ministerial nominees, provided they are approved by the *Dáil*, and to ratify any dismissals requested by the *Taoiseach* (Article 13.2.0 and 28.9.30).

The *Taoiseach* is obliged to keep the head of state, the president, informed on matters of domestic and international policy (Article 28.5.20), whom he advises on the summoning and dissolution of the *Dáil*

(Article 13.2.1.0). He presents bills for the president's signature (Article 25.1.), and certifies bills as urgent (Article 24). The *Taoiseach* is obliged to nominate a member of the Government to be the *Tánaiste* (literally heir-apparent) or deputy prime minister (Article 28.6.1.0). The *Taoiseach*, the *Tánaiste* and the member of the Government who is in charge of the Department of Finance are obliged to be members of *Dáil Éireann* (Article 28.7.10). The other members of the Government may be members of *Dáil Éireann* or *Seanad Éireann* (the Senate), although the *Taoiseach* may not nominate more than two members of *Seanad Éireann* to the Government (Article 28.7.2.0)³⁰. The *Taoiseach* appoints 11 members of the 60-person Senate (Articles 18.1 and 18.3) which guarantees the Government a working majority in the second chamber; and he appoints the Attorney General, who is not a member of the Government but attends its meetings. Finally, the *Taoiseach* must resign from office upon ceasing to retain the support of a majority in *Dáil Éireann*, unless on his advice the president dissolves *Dáil Éireann* and on the reassembly of the *Dáil* after the dissolution the *Taoiseach* secures the support of a majority in *Dáil Éireann* (Article 28.10.)³¹

The last provision of Article 28 (12) specifies matters to be 'regulated in accordance with law': including the organisation, distribution and designation of ministerial responsibilities for the Departments of State. The relevant statute is primarily found in the Ministries and Secretaries Act, 1924, and subsequent amending acts. These acts specify certain functional ministries each headed by a minister who is 'corporation sole', i.e. legally accountable for all his department's acts. These acts make it more awkward for an Irish prime minister to reorganise central government than it is for his British counterpart. The relevant acts also provide for the appointment of junior ministers. In the beginning their number was limited to seven. Since then the number has been increased to 15, and their titles have been changed from 'parliamentary secretaries' to 'ministers of state'. These junior ministers rarely attend cabinet meetings, apart from the Government Chief Whip, who is designated Minister of State at the Department of the *Taoiseach* (and of Defence) and arranges the parliamentary time-table.

What is the position of the *Taoiseach* compared with the other constitutionally established organs in *Bunreacht na hÉireann*? The Constitution devotes more than twice as many sentences to defining the functions of the head of state, the president, as it does to the provisions empowering the head of the Government. However, the president is primarily a symbolic figure, despite his French traits: he is directly elected (Article 12.2.10); holds office for seven years and is capable of being re-elected once more (Article 12.3); is the supreme commander of the defence forces (Article 13.4); possesses the right of pardon (Article 13.6) and can appoint and dismiss members of the Council of State (Article 31.2. and 31.7). The president's status as a political cipher is none the less spelled out in one key provision: 'The powers and functions conferred on the President by this Constitution shall be exercisable and performable by him only on the advice of the Government, save where it is provided in this Constitution that he shall act in his absolute discretion or after consultation with ...'

the Council of State³² . . . or . . . any other person or body' (Article 13.9). Thus judges are appointed by the president, but only on the advice of the Government (Article 35).

There are, however, four provisions which give the president a role as guardian of the constitution and the people's rights. First, he may convene a meeting of either of both houses of the *Oireachtas*, a provision intended for emergencies. Second, if a majority of the *Seanad* and not less than a third of the *Dáil* petition the president not to sign a bill he may accede to the request, and institute a referendum on the measure. However, given the Government's control of the *Seanad* this provision has never been requested. Third, he may, after consultation with the Council of State, refer the constitutionality of parliamentary bills to the Supreme Court (Article 26. 1. 10). In September 1976, President Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh, himself a former President of the Supreme Court, referred the constitutionality of the Emergency Powers Bill (1976) to the Court. The then minister for Defence, Patrick Donegan, riposted by publicly describing the supreme commander of the defence forces as a 'thundering disgrace' (in the printable attributions). Donegan offered his resignation, but the *Taoiseach*, Liam Cosgrave, refused it, indicating that a letter of apology would suffice. He thereby precipitated the furious president's resignation in defence of the dignity of his office. Cosgrave then acted with consummate party-political skill. He colluded with opposition leader Lynch in allowing former European Commissioner Patrick Hillery to be nominated unopposed for the presidency – and thereby removed one of Fianna Fáil's most popular politicians. He dispatched one of his party loyalists and senior ministers to Brussels, and reshuffled his cabinet (including Donegan) in a way which rewarded his stalwarts. The fact that a *Taoiseach* had no compunctions about letting a senior minister publicly abuse the head of state's entirely proper use of his constitutional prerogatives speaks volumes about the status of the presidency.³³ Fourth, and finally, the president has it in his 'absolute discretion' to refuse to retain the support of a parliamentary of a *Taoiseach* who has ceased to retain the support of a parliamentary majority (Article 12. 20). This right has never been used. In 1938 and 1944 the president acceded to de Valera's request for dissolutions after the government sustained defeats in the *Dáil*. In 1989 there were four feasible scenarios for government-formation after Haughey had failed to win his party a parliamentary majority: another Fianna Fáil minority government, a Fianna Fáil–Progressive Democrats coalition, a Fianna Fáil–Fine Gael coalition or another general election. Haughey attempted to pursue the first scenario but was defeated in the nomination for *Taoiseach*. The nominees of other parties also failed to be elected. Haughey, very reluctantly, was obliged to tender his resignation as *Taoiseach* and to head a caretaker administration. This outcome was unprecedented, and provoked immense speculation because of uncertainty about the relevant constitutional provisions. Article 13 (1) makes it clear that only *Dáil Éireann* can nominate the *Taoiseach*, and suggests that the president can play no formal role in finding a *Taoiseach* when no party or coalition enjoys a majority in *Dáil Éireann*. Article 13 (2) 2 declares that 'The President

may in his absolute discretion refuse to dissolve *Dáil Éireann* on the advice of a *Taoiseach* who has ceased to retain the support of a majority in *Dáil Éireann*'. Three constitutional controversies were at stake. First, would the president, for the first time in the history of the state, exercise his absolute discretion and reject a request for a dissolution if Haughey were to make such a request? Second, would the caretaker *Taoiseach*, who had never enjoyed the support of the 26th *Dáil*, have the constitutional right to request such a dissolution? Third, would the president have the right to play the role, executed by presidents and monarchs in other parliamentary systems, of finding another prime minister who could win the confidence of the legislature? Sadly for lovers of constitutional imbrolios these questions were not definitely answered because the crisis was solved by the formation of a coalition government between Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats. To date, therefore, no Irish president has acted as a major constraint on a *Taoiseach* or his Government. Indeed the tone of the Irish presidency was set by its first three holders who have been described as 'elderly, inert and scrupulous in keeping themselves outside and above political argument'.³⁴ Since 1973 there has been no contest for the presidency, Patrick Hillery being nominated unopposed in 1976 and 1983.* His tenure has been uneventful, although he did convene the Council of State to consider the constitutionality of two measures: a bill giving British citizens the right to vote in Irish parliamentary elections, and a Criminal Justice bill.

The Constitution explicitly and implicitly grants the *Taoiseach* and his Government considerable power over the legislature. The *Oireachtas* is primarily a formal processing machine for governmental initiatives. The *Taoiseach* is responsible for the order of business in the *Dáil* and controls that of the Senate. The Government is not even bound by convention to announce its parliamentary programme in advance of each session.³⁵ Government bills are rarely substantively amended, and private members' bills are never successful. The *Taoiseach* and the Government have an exclusive monopoly on public expenditure proposals: 'no law shall be enacted, for the appropriation of revenue or other public moneys unless the purpose of the appropriation shall have been recommended to *Dáil Éireann* by a message from the Government signed by the *Taoiseach*' (Article 17.2). Parliamentary control over executive expenditure, as in other Westminster systems, is very weak. Despite recent modifications, the *Dáil*'s committee system does not provide an effective check against executive dominance. Moreover, deputies use ministerial question time to raise constituency matters at the expense of policy or general administrative issues. In any case, the *Taoiseach* and Government ministers find evasion, or an appeal to executive confidentiality, as simple means for avoiding awkward questions. The Government's own internal and confidential memoranda

*In 1990, after this essay was completed, the presidency was contested. In a surprise outcome Mrs Mary Robinson, supported by the Labour Party and the Workers' Party, defeated Brian Lenihan, the Fianna Fáil candidate. She won after receiving most of the second-preference transfers of the third-placed candidate. Austin Currie of Fine Gael, Robinson is the first female president and first winning candidate, not supported by Fianna Fáil. Lenihan's campaign imploded when he appeared to have lied about his conduct in the early 1980s.

for legislative procedures dramatically confirm the power of the executive. Sponsoring departments must consult the Department of Finance and any other department with an interest in the matter. Should a bill affect constitutional provisions then the Attorney General must be consulted. The general proposal is then drafted for Government approval before being sent to the parliamentary draftsmen, and subsequent circulation to the *Dáil* and *Seanad*. In nearly all cases these draft bills then become laws.

The Government is, however, responsible to *Dáil Éireann* (Article 28.4.1), and is required to 'meet and act as a collective authority', and be collectively responsible for the Departments of State administered by the members of the Government' (Article 28.4.2), but these provisions do not significantly constrain the executive as they do not appear to be justiciable. In any case under coalition governments 'collective responsibility' frequently breaks down without provoking a constitutional crisis. One *Taoiseach*, Liam Cosgrave, supported by another minister, in 1974 voted against a family planning bill being introduced by one of his other ministers – a flagrant breach of Article 28.4.2. A similar bill being introduced in 1978 by Haughey, then minister for Health, was opposed by one of his cabinet colleagues and long-standing political rivals, James Gibbons. These events justify the axiom that collective responsibility in Irish government does not extend to matters of contravention.

The Irish executive, like its British counterpart, is therefore generally in a potent position compared with the head of state, and the legislature. Moreover, it presides over a unitary political system which has some claims to compete with the UK for the title of the most centralised state in Western Europe – local government having been progressively emasculated. However, unlike its British counterpart the Irish executive is constrained by a formal constitution and a Supreme Court. Although the government appoints judges to the Supreme Court when vacancies arise, and often on the basis of party-affiliation, they have no immediate control over them – except the so far unused power of impeachment. Indeed in the last three decades the independence of the Supreme Court has become much more important, both in protecting citizens' constitutional rights and in constraining executive action. In the period March 1984 to July 1987 more than 200 constitutional cases were decided in the courts.³⁶ Moreover two referenda were forced on governments in the 1980s as a direct result of Supreme Court decisions. In the first, the Ninth Amendment of the Constitution Act, 1984, was passed to allow the Oireachtas to enfranchise non-citizens resident in the state. This measure was part of Prime Minister FitzGerald's 'constitutional crusade' to make Ireland more politically attractive to unionists in Northern Ireland. The Supreme Court had earlier ruled that the Electoral (Amendment) Bill, 1983, which had sought to extend the franchise to British citizens resident in Ireland was repugnant to the Constitution (*in Re Art. 26 and the Electoral (Amendment) Bill 1983, 1984 IR 286*). In the second, the Tenth Amendment of the Constitution Act, 1987, was passed, allowing the State to ratify the Single European Act (SEA). The Supreme Court had ruled, in a split verdict, that the SEA infringed Irish sovereignty and therefore the Constitution (in

Croty v. An Taoiseach 1987 ILRM 400). The court's verdict in the *Croty* case, and the reasoning behind it, have dramatic implications for the scope of Ireland's executive power in foreign policy.³⁷ Some contend that the ruling casts doubts on many of the international agreements entered into by Ireland, including Irish membership of the United Nations and the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, and have argued that it is necessary to propose a constitutional amendment to prevent judicial regulation of international agreements. However, rather than pursue this course, the Government chose to propose a pragmatic constitutional amendment enabling the state to ratify the SEA. Pending future cases it is however reasonable to conclude that the Supreme Court has circumscribed the scope of executive autonomy in foreign affairs.

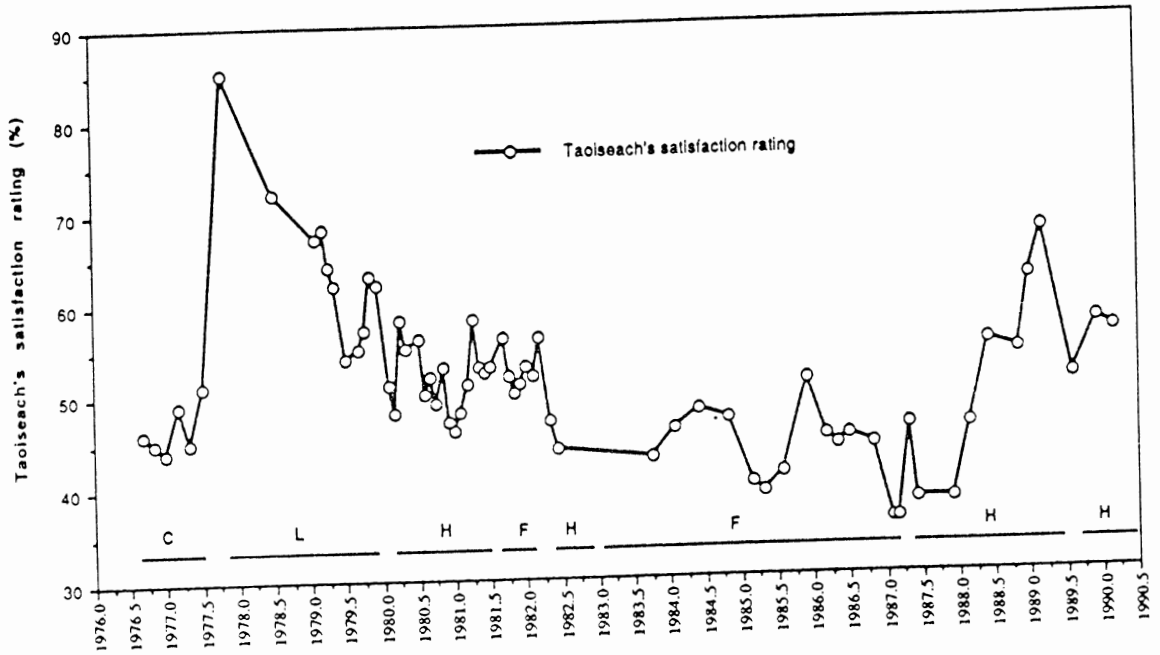
This review of the constitutional status of the *Taoiseach* does not facilitate an easy verdict on the issue of whether he is a chairman or chief. However, one tentative and literally inexact assessment that 'Perhaps one general trend can be discerned: both constitutionally and in practice the role and power of the *Taoiseach* have increased since 1922'³⁸ is not constitutionally sustainable. Although the *Taoiseach's* constitutional role and powers, compared with that of the President of the Executive Council, were increased by the Constitution of 1937, this transformation cannot be referred to as 'a general trend' since there have been no subsequent increases in the constitutional as opposed to statutory powers and competences of the *Taoiseach*. Whether the *Taoiseach's* power 'in practice' has been subject to a growth-trend is something to be resolved, if at all, by historical rather than legal evidence.

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE TAOISEACH

A proper historical analysis of Ireland's *Taoisigh* would require five distinct elements: histories of their management of their cabinets, parliaments and parties; and of their policy-making initiatives and styles. A full overview would also require criteria for appraising the 'success' of *Taoisigh* as leaders – both in style and substance. However, there are no neutral or widespread criteria for assessing performance in the leadership literature. The development of such criteria and assessments cannot be attempted here. Instead I appraise whether or not there have been any distinct trends in the leadership styles, policy-activities and popularity of *Taoisigh* in the last 30 years.

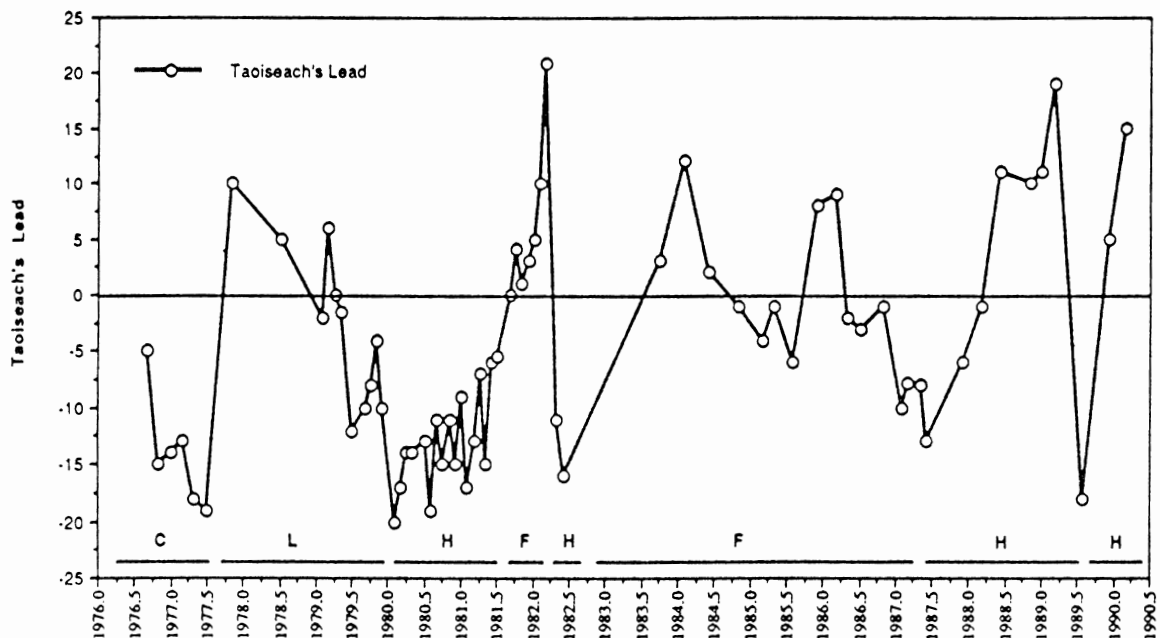
Lemass's premiership (1959–66) was vigorous. He broke decisively from the somnambulism of the last years of de Valera, and paved the way for Ireland's economic modernisation through his decisions to open Ireland's markets to foreign investment, and his development of a flurry of economic initiatives. There is also no doubt that his cabinet style was brisk, if not brusque, and votes rather than consensus decided issues in government. However, although Lemass organised the transfer of power away from the revolutionary gerontocrats who had made up de Valera's cabinets he did so gradually – and one revolutionary veteran, Aiken, survived as a minister until 1969. A 'boss' he may have been, but he was

FIGURE 1
SATISFACTION-RATINGS OF TAOISEIGH 1976-90 (IMS/MRBI POLLS)



Key: Taoiseach's tenure indicated by letter: C = Cosgrave, L = Lynch, H = Haughey and F = FitzGerald.
Sources: IMS Polls 1976-83; MRBI Polls 1984-90. Polls conducted in the same month have been averaged.

FIGURE 2
TAOISEACH'S LEAD OVER LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION, 1976-90 (IMS/MRBI POLLS)



Key: Taoiseach's tenure indicated by letter: C = Cosgrave, L = Lynch, H = Haughey and F = FitzGerald.
Sources: IMS Polls 1976-83; MRBI Polls 1984-90. Polls conducted in the same month have been averaged.

no tyrant. One admirer has cast Lemass in an heroic mould: 'The essence of the Lemass approach [was] the attempt to substitute the performance principle for the possessor principle in Irish Life.' Unlike his predecessors, he avoided invoking Ireland's allegedly 'Christian' mission in the world, and focused upon trying to increase economic growth and reduce emigration. Lemass in Lee's judgement was a visionary because he tried to fashion a new national character, through directing economic expansion and competition. However, the project was not viable: 'The Lemass strategy could probably operate effectively only in an Ireland of little Lemasses.' Greatness in Irish political culture, according to the same analyst, is defined in terms of defiance of the external enemy, and were it otherwise the true stature of Lemass's premiership would be properly recognised.³⁹

His successor, Lynch, appeared a compromise choice, elected by the parliamentary party after Fianna Fáil's first leadership contest. His initial cabinet therefore contained three serious rivals for his job, George Colley, Neil Blaney and Haughey. However, it was not just for this reason that Lynch self-consciously reverted to de Valera's manner of conducting business: 'I liked to engage everyone around the table the way Dev did,' whereas Lemass was more direct in handling Government meetings.⁴⁰ His avuncular, calm personality and gentle political style differed markedly from that of Lemass, winning him warm electoral approval, although the policies pursued by his cabinets were no different. There was however a marked deceleration in 'liberalisation' under his first premiership. For instance, he ignored the report of the Committee on the Constitution established by Lemass. Once Lynch had won his first general election and secured an overall parliamentary majority, his authority within the party was established. His leadership survived the 'arms crisis' of 1970 and his parliamentary party was forced to back him or risk a showdown with the electorate. His Northern Ireland policy, which put the stability of the Irish Republic before re-unification aspirations continued the tacit revisionism which Lemass had initiated. Lynch's predicament, having to talk like a republican and act like a pragmatist,⁴¹ had considerable rapport with the electorate. He was a sufficiently strong party leader by 1973 to survive an election defeat. He could hardly be blamed given that Fianna Fáil's share of the first-preference vote had actually risen (defeat was occasioned by disciplined transfers of preferences between Fine Gael and Labour voters). There was no denying Lynch's dramatic electoral popularity (see Figures 1 and 2). Having led Cosgrave in the 'satisfaction rankings' from the first steady public opinion polls to be conducted in Ireland he went on to win his party a triumphant electoral victory in 1977, obtaining his party an absolute majority of the first-preference vote – a distinction de Valera had accomplished only once (in 1938). Immediately afterwards he enjoyed a breathtaking 85 per cent satisfaction-ranking as *Taoiseach*. However, factionalism was by now rife within Fianna Fáil, and his cabinet's mismanagement of the Irish economy eroded his wider appeal and predominance among his colleagues. His last years in office as stagflation gathered and budget-deficits grew *pari passu*, were turbulent and indecisive, as supporters of Haughey and Colley vied

for the expected succession, and Fine Gael, led by FitzGerald, mounted an effective challenge to Fianna Fáil's conception of itself as the 'natural party of government'.

Liam Cosgrave (1973–77) was a tragedy, introverted and constipated *Taoiseach*. Intensely conservative and patriotic he none the less presided over the partial 'social democratisation' of Irish politics. His cabinet of 'all the talents' included some of the most liberal ministers ever to grace an Irish cabinet: FitzGerald at Foreign Affairs, Justin Keating of Labour at Industry and Commerce, and Conor Cruise O'Brien of Labour at Posts and Telegraphs. However, no one gives Cosgrave credit for any of the coalition's imaginative policy-initiatives. Indeed he had just survived a leadership challenge within his party before he became *Taoiseach*. None the less he immediately stamped his authority upon his party's cabinet ministers, making FitzGerald minister for Foreign Affairs, and Richard Ryan minister of Finance, despite the fact that their portfolios in opposition had been reversed. Interpreted, correctly, as a manoeuvre to sideline FitzGerald, the switch eventually backfired when Ryan took the brunt of the blame for the coalition government's economic management, leaving FitzGerald, unsullied by domestic policy disasters, as the most obvious succession-candidate. Cosgrave's reshuffle of Fine Gael ministers after the Donegan affair showed similar ruthlessness in promoting friends and sidelining rivals. He was forced, however, to rely on Fine Gael's 'social democratic' ministers to bridge the gaps between him and the Labour ministers, and to sustain his government's cohesion. Moreover, he mismanaged the timing of the general election called in 1977. The scale of the coalition's defeat forced his immediate resignation of the party leadership.

When Haughey became *Taoiseach* in 1979 he was severely handicapped. First, he was a controversial choice. Although he had an outstanding track-record as an energetic and innovative minister of justice, agriculture and finance in the 1960s, his career was blighted by the 'arms crisis' of 1970. Though he was found not guilty of charges of illegal gun-running to Northern Ireland, questions about his conduct and judgement demanded answers. The trial provoked a long-running feud between Lynch and Desmond O'Malley on one side, and Haughey on the other. To rebuild his political career within the party Haughey became much more nationalist in rhetoric, although he had not been previously identified with 'republicanism'. The Irish media were hostile to him, querying the origins of his financial wealth, and at best regarding him as an adventurous opportunist.⁴² Second, Haughey had been elected by the parliamentary Fianna Fáil Party over the nearly unanimous opposition of the existing cabinet and junior ministers, and by a margin of a mere six votes over his rival George Colley. Lynch's preferred choice. Haughey's first cabinet therefore dramatically over-represented his enemies. Colley proceeded to elaborate a bizarre and unprecedented doctrine of 'conditional loyalty' to the new *Taoiseach*. Moreover he insisted on having a veto on the ministerial appointments to Justice and Defence, fearing that Haughey would not maintain Lynch's security policy against republican subversives.⁴³ Third, Haughey became *Taoiseach* amidst a severe economic crisis, exacerbated by government mismanagement, and he did not appear prepared to

TABLE 2
COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SATISFACTION RATINGS OF TAOISIGH, 1976-90

	(a) 1976-90				Average lead over Leader of the Opposition
	maximum	minimum	median	mean	
Taoiseach					
Cosgrave	51	44	45.5	46.6	
Lynch	85	54	67	64.5	
Haughey	67	38	53	51.3	
FitzGerald	56	36	47	46.4	
	(b) 1976-89				
Taoiseach	Tenure				
Cosgrave	1976-7		-14.0: Lynch		
Lynch	1977-9		-2.4: FitzGerald		
Haughey (1)	1979-81		-13.8: FitzGerald		
FitzGerald (1)	1981-2		+6.2: Haughey		
Haughey (2)	1982		-13.5: FitzGerald		
FitzGerald (2)	1982-7		-0.1: Haughey		
Haughey (3)	1987-9		+1.8: Dukes		

Source: Calculated from IMS/MRBI polls.

implement the necessary programme of 'hairshirt economics.' Finally, he was handicapped by the fact that he faced a leader of Fine Gael who for six years (1979-86) was consistently to outperform him in electoral appeal (see Table 2). This gap was all the more dramatic as poll support for Fianna Fáil was usually dramatically above that for Fine Gael.

Yet despite calling and losing a general election in 1981 Haughey survived as leader of Fianna Fáil, aided by the parliamentary weakness of the coalition government. But after he failed to win an overall majority in the February 1982 election a leadership challenge was intimated from O'Malley and O'Donoghue. Having faced down this threat, he was able to make a 'pork-barrel' deal with independent TDs and returned to power as *Taoiseach*, but at the head of a minority government. His 1982 government will go down in history in Conor Cruise O'Brien's phrase as the year of the 'GUBU', after Haughey described the involvement of his Attorney General in a murder inquiry as 'grotesque, unpredictable, bizarre and unbelievable.' His short stay in office was characterised by incompetence, if not gross abuse of office, on the part of ministerial appointees who were his close political associates, notably the minister of Justice. He allocated the most important economic ministries to his loyalists, including the ministry of Finance and position of *Tánaiste* to Ray MacSharry. The impact of the need for economic retrenchment, and the regular association of his ministers with alleged and real scandal - including the telephone-tapping of journalists and party-rivals - produced the unprecedented step of a motion of 'no confidence' in Haughey's leadership being debated within the Fianna Fáil parliamentary party. Haughey was able to guarantee backing from all but

two of his cabinet - O'Malley and O'Donoghue decided to resign - and his supporters were able to win a majority for a roll-call vote rather than a secret ballot on the motion of no confidence. Haughey won by 58 votes to 22, but when he lost another general election at the end of the year he seemed doomed. However, he survived a parliamentary party motion of no confidence in his leadership by 40 votes to 33 by orchestrating support in the wider party, and skilfully playing off his multiple rivals against each other. This time the vote had been by secret ballot, and thereafter he was able to increase his grip on the party, and expel his most serious rivals, notably O'Donoghue and O'Malley. In late 1985 and early 1986 the departure of dissidents to form a new political party, the Progressive Democrats, cemented Haughey's party leadership.⁴⁴ Therefore, when he returned to government in 1987 he gave a much more assured performance, executing U-turns in policy-commitments with consummate ease, and showed some of the political flair of his earlier ministerships. More relaxed about his leadership, his cabinet management appeared to become more consensual and collegial. Haughey has been an effective cutback-manager since 1987, extensively engaged in economic policy-making, and much less preoccupied than FitzGerald with making initiatives on Northern Ireland or within the European Community. In part these traits are by-products of circumstance, but also suggest, contrary to the expectations of both friends and enemies, that Haughey had never really been an ideological politician or a visionary with programmatic commitments. Rather he is at his happiest in symbolic politics and managing government departments: what one might expect of an 'ambitious accountant'. However, despite his increased satisfaction-ratings as *Taoiseach* (see Figure 2 and Table 2), he continues to be a poor performer during general election campaigns which makes it impossible for him to enjoy the authority commanded by his predecessors as Fianna Fáil leaders.

FitzGerald has been the most successful Fine Gael leader and *Taoiseach* in party-political terms. He led his party to the highest levels of support it has ever enjoyed in Irish public opinion polls or in general elections. He is the first undisputed leader of his party to have been *Taoiseach* twice; and on four occasions helped prevent the election of majority Fianna Fáil administrations. Strangely described as an 'enigma' by one of his biographers, he is best understood as an energetic pluralist intellectual, anxious to liberalise Irish social policy and the Constitution, both for its own sake and to encourage rapprochement with Ulster Protestants. He endeavoured to manage the Irish economy in a social democratic manner even though circumstances were not propitious. He will be remembered for launching the New Ireland Forum, and negotiating the Anglo-Irish Agreement; and as the *Taoiseach* whose constitutional crusade was compromised by opportunism and ran up against the barriers to pluralism in a Catholic-dominated country. He promised, at the height of electoral competition with Fianna Fáil in 1981-82, a referendum to constitutionalise the outlawing of abortion, and in 1986 his government presented a foolishly worded referendum proposal in a failed attempt to legalise divorce. His cabinet style was consensual and collegial, although

he was criticised by his colleagues for being long-winded, over-zealous in trying to persuade them of his views, and prone to turning a cabinet meeting into an academic seminar. He displayed a formidable mastery of all his ministers' briefs and actively commented on their portfolios. None the less he overshadowed his minister for Foreign Affairs both within cabinet and in external perception, and much controversial cabinet business was decided in advance through an informal troika, consisting of the *Taoiseach*, the *Tánaiste* and leader of the Labour Party, and the minister for Finance. FitzGerald generally umpired the disputes between the other two, who represented the ideological and policy-divergences within the coalition. FitzGerald also showed considerable nous as a party manager: organising the restructuring of his party in the wake of its defeat in 1977.⁴⁵ He resigned promptly after his electoral defeat in 1987, thereby paving the way for his favoured successor, Alan Dukes.

This miniature historical survey of recent *Taoisigh* makes it difficult to conclude that there has been any trend-increase in prime-ministerial power in Ireland in the last 25 years. Personal policy-imitation was more extensive under Lemass and FitzGerald than under Lynch and Cosgrave, and, thus far, Haughey. The scope of prime-ministerial activity, especially over the European Community and Northern Ireland, has increased since the 1960s, but it has not obviously enhanced the power of *Taoisigh* over other constitutionally established organs, or their cabinet colleagues. Cabinet collegiality was greater under Lynch's first premiership than it was under Lemass or Haughey's first two terms as *Taoiseach*. All prime ministers, except Haughey, enjoyed firm authority within their parties, unless and until their electoral performance came into question. The 'approval-ratings' of *Taoisigh*, as measured by opinion polls, reveal if anything a general downward trend since 1976-77 (see Figure 1), but it might equally be argued that they reveal 'trendless fluctuation'. Should we conclude, therefore that prime-ministerial power ebbs and flows subject to such precise variables as 'personality' and 'circumstance'? It would be premature to do so before we have examined what political science can offer to the study of the Irish core executive.

POLITICAL SCIENCE AND THE TAOISEACH

There are three ways in which analysis could advance the social scientific investigation of the *Taoiseach*: first, through case-studies of critical decisions or non-decisions in Irish government; second, through elaborating and testing the merits of explanatory models of the core executive; and finally, through applying the political science literature on parties and party-government to the study of the Irish government.

Case-studies in critical decision-making. Unfortunately there is a paucity of studies of key decision-making episodes from which to generate conclusions about prime-ministerial power in Ireland. Ideally such case-studies would enable us to assess whether or not power is cumulatively, collegially or segmentally dispersed within the core executive. Three areas of policy are ripe candidates for such investigation: constitutional initiatives,

foreign affairs and economic management. These policy-zones are where we would expect prime-ministerial salience, and consequently in-depth investigation might enable us to see better the limits on any *Taoiseach*. It is perhaps easiest to analyse prime ministers' roles in attempted constitutional transformations. Only one prime minister, de Valera, has designed the constitution of his choice, and was able to enhance the *Taoiseach's* status. However, subsequently even strong prime ministers have been unable to change the constitution without widespread consensus. Both de Valera and Lynch failed in the constitutional referendums they launched to change the electoral system away from STV to something which would have suited Fianna Fáil. Cross-party consensus, or at least consensus across Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, is vital to successful constitutional transformation – as with the repeal of the special position of the Roman Catholic Church in 1972, entry into the EC in 1972, and acceptance of the Single European Act in 1987. Constitutional change is not something which can be affected simply by the will of powerful or popular prime ministers.

There is also a dearth of in-depth investigations of prime-ministerial power and influence in foreign affairs.⁴⁶ Historians have established that de Valera was pre-eminent among his colleagues in this arena, holding the ministry of Foreign Affairs for most of his premiership. Most of his colleagues deferred to his 'expertise' in the development of his Ulster 'policy' or rather 'policies', or in handling Anglo-Irish relations. Indeed British ministers gathered the impression that de Valera did not confide with his colleagues, and noted his reluctance to commit matters to paper.⁴⁷ None the less even de Valera had to tread carefully between the rhetoric his party espoused, and the realities of Northern Ireland – which often prevented the elaboration of feasible policies. The Northern Ireland policies of all subsequent Irish prime ministers have been equally constrained by nationalist shibboleths, but in the absence of in-depth study a convincing judgement would be premature. The argument that EC membership has enhanced the prime minister's power in foreign affairs is a commonplace in Ireland, as it is in other member states. However, this thesis has not been systematically examined. The EC, especially after the SEA, both limits and pools the sovereignty of states, so there is no reason to believe in principle why it should not both constrain and enhance the position of the executives of these states. Indeed, given the degree to which every ministerial function is 'internationalised' by EC responsibilities, might it not be just as plausible to contend that the *Taoiseach* and domestic ministers are collectively obliged to engage in the steady erosion of the prerogatives of the Department of Foreign Affairs? Although EC membership may have blurred the traditional boundaries between domestic and foreign policy, weakened foreign ministers, and obliged prime ministers to play a greater co-ordinating role across foreign and domestic ministries, we cannot conclude, in the absence of in-depth decision-making studies, that the power of domestic ministers relative to the *Taoiseach* had declined.⁴⁸ Finally, the role of the *Taoiseach* and his department in economic management has not received widespread attention either from economists or political scientists. However, one excellent study of wage-regulation

between 1970 and 1987 implicitly suggests that Ireland's core executive lacks the necessary institutionalisation to develop the effective corporatist economic strategies practised successfully in other small democratic states. The core executive, the employers and trade unions alike lack the degree of disciplined organisation to make centralised wage-bargaining work; the scope of governmental control over economic performance is limited because the core executive lacks the necessary strategic capability and precision; and finally, because the organisation of political issues in Ireland does not primarily follow socio-economic cleavages, the development of corporatist institutions is inhibited.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, both Haughey-led governments since 1987 have appeared to be shifting this pessimism about the capabilities of the Irish core executive. Notwithstanding multiple difficulties, the government has successfully negotiated a corporatist programme for national recovery which has delivered a remarkably low inflation rate. However, such reflections refer to the capabilities of the executive as a whole: at present there is no literature on key economic decision-making which evaluates the relative salience of the *Taoiseach*, the minister for Finance and other actors in the Irish economic policy process.⁵⁰

Explanatory models and organisation theory. Irish political scientists and policy analysts have not, thus far, used organisation theory or explanatory models of the core executive. Only the first two of five perspectives detected by reviewers of the British core executive literature (prime-ministerial government, cabinet government, ministerial government, segmented decision-making and bureaucratic domination⁵¹) have been applied in Ireland. However, there is no reason why matters must remain thus. First, given the absence of a developed cabinet sub-committee system – except with respect to Northern Ireland and the EC – there are good reasons to suppose that Jones's conception of 'ministerial government' provides a convincing description of key features of Irish government.⁵² Political and administrative departmentalism are regularly reported by journalists, and accounts of such tendencies figure heavily in Hussey's diary-entries on her role as Education minister under FitzGerald. Indeed proposals to reform Irish central administration have founded on their implications for ministerial autonomy.⁵³ Moreover the Irish Government is constitutionally constrained to be a body of no more than 15 ministers. This provision not only conforms to Parkinson's law that the size of an effective working committee should never exceed 15, but also, when combined with other constitutional conventions, has restrained the development of an extended sub-committee structure – and thus prevented prime ministers from deploying one well-known control-technique. Ministers are jealous of their constitutional powers and fight to sustain them – encouraged by their departmental civil servants.

Second, there is scope for applying the concept of 'segmented decision-making' to Irish government. The idea here is that prime ministers concentrate their attention on privileged policy-domains where they expect to be predominant over their colleagues, whereas in other domains they expect ministerial or collegial decision-making to prevail. For example, for FitzGerald Northern Ireland and development-aid were reserved issues: 'I

made it clear at the beginning [to the Government] that there were one or two things on which I would expect support. Northern Ireland was one, development-aid was another on which they knew they wouldn't be able to get me on... For the rest I ran the Government democratically. Okay [issues] were taken to a vote, and I was in a minority in Government, as often as not. I accepted that, but not on Northern Ireland. So that on Northern Ireland they knew they couldn't bring it to a vote, and wouldn't attempt to, because it was something that mattered too much to me.'⁵⁴ This revealing insight on the impact of one prime minister's special interests on government decision-making is one which needs to be followed up to see if it is of general applicability to all *Taoisigh*.

Third, the role of the 'permanent government', the Irish civil service, on the operations of the core executive cries out for greater research. Finally, studies are warranted which investigate the Irish core executive through testing contingency theory, 'bureaucratics' and other ideas in the organisation theory literature. Since such conceptions and theories have not been tested we do not know what they might reveal about the roles of Irish *Taoisigh*.

None the less a brief inspection of the structure of the *Taoiseach's* department suggests the relevance of the 'segmented decision-making' conception of the Irish core executive. The department's key policy-activities and divisions in 1990 are as follows: Government Secretariat and General Division, Northern Ireland and International Division; Economic and Social Policy Division; Arts and Culture Division; Special Developments Projects; Personnel; and Finance and Management Services Division. In addition a new 'European Bureau' has been established to co-ordinate and campaign on the implications of 1992. The department also houses 'Government Information Services' which is in charge of media management and public relations. Before 1980 the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of the Department of the *Taoiseach* were always the Secretary and Assistant Secretary to the Government. Since then the posts have been distinguished, although the Government Secretariat remains firmly within the *Taoiseach's* department. It is responsible for preparing the cabinet agenda, and servicing any cabinet sub-committees. It advises ministers to follow standard operating procedures, codified in a confidential document known as *Procedure in Government or Cabinet Procedure*, which specifies how government business must be framed; procedures for resolving inter-departmental disputes; and procedures for consultation and circulation of information.

The existence of this prime minister's department is no proof of overweening monocratic power. The Government Secretariat serves the entire cabinet. The key advisory divisions are dependent upon other departments for extensive back-up. Administratively and legally the relatively large size of the Department of the *Taoiseach* is a function of its status as residual catch-all. It is responsible according to the Ministers and Secretaries Act of 1924 for all the public services which are not allocated to any other departments, which means that bodies such as the Irish Manuscripts Commission and the Royal Hospital Kilmainham

find their home there. The *Taoiseach* has merely four special advisers (one of whom is a cultural adviser), although the government's press officer has been a friend of the prime minister under FitzGerald and Haughey. The three junior ministers have responsibilities as chief whip, co-ordinator of government policy and European Community matters, and heritage affairs respectively. Two of the junior ministers are simultaneously attached to other departments: Defence and Finance. The rest of the small staff are career civil servants, only a handful of whom will be identified as supporters of one party rather than another, and can expect to reside in other departments on a change of government. Their advisory functions, as the division titles suggest, are primarily on Northern Ireland, international affairs (especially the EC), and economic and social policy. This arrangement is what might be expected from a 'segmented decision-making' perspective.

Party-government as the key explanations. If the available literature is not helpful on decision-analysis and the testing of organisation theory we are better served by studies of party politics. The assumptions of the 'party government' perspective on executive power are that, *ceteris paribus*, the decision-making power (policy-initiating, managerial and administrative) accruing to the role of prime ministers is a function of two key variables: inter-party competition and the nature of intra-party government.

The impact of inter-party competition on the power of the prime minister can be reduced to two questions: (i) is there alternation in party-government? and (ii) what type of party-government is headed by the prime minister? If one party holds power for an extended period of time in a competitive system, with electoral support at or above the majority threshold, then it is operating within a 'predominant party-system'⁵⁵ – as with Fianna Fáil (1933–48, and 1957–73). Political scientists would predict two consequences for prime-ministerial power. The most likely scenario is a powerful personalist premiership, in which the prime minister and the clique surrounding him or her are the key sources of policy initiative and development, as under the Gandhi premiership, in India. But under a predominant party system extensive 'factionalism' is possible within the governing party, and can circumscribe the power of the prime minister, as in Japan. However Fianna Fáil's predominance is curtailed by PR-STV and the periodic willingness of its opponents to form coalitions. If comparison must be made with predominant party systems then Ireland under de Valera was closer to India under Nehru as opposed to the Gandhis. Fianna Fáil's parliamentary deputies knew that alternation in government was conceivable, and this belief disciplined the feasibility of revolt, and acted as a constraint both on the public development of leadership- cliques and factionalism within the party before 1966. However, since then party factionalism has undermined the leaderships of both Lynch and Haughey.

'What type of government is headed by the prime minister?' is the second question on the impact of inter-party competition on the prime minister's role. Is it a single-party majority, single-party minority, coalition-majority or coalition-minority government? Majority single-party governments,

provided party discipline is strong, empower prime ministers with considerable policy-making discretion. It might, however, also be contended that majority government status weakens party discipline and encourages factionalism – as the experience of Fianna Fáil governments after the elections of 1969 and 1977 might suggest. Minority governments, by contrast, constrain the feasible legislative initiatives available to prime ministers whether they head single parties or coalitions, and also enhance the bargaining power of dissidents within the prime minister's party. In this case, however, it might also be argued that the dangers posed to the government by minority status reinforce party discipline to the benefit of the prime minister. Finally, coalition or inter-party governments force the prime minister to share power with the leaders of other political parties, which obviously restrains use of his panoply of constitutional powers. However, in this position the prime minister can sometimes use the need to maintain the coalition to force his party to follow his own policy-preferences. FitzGerald was sometimes accused by his more conservative colleagues within Fine Gael of using his position as umpire in the coalition governments with Labour to pursue his own social democratic orientations.

Since type of government, single-party majority, single-party minority and the coalition variants, can serve either to increase or decrease prime-ministerial power it may appear that the predictions of 'party-science' are proverbial, that is, contradictory. However, we need not be so despairing. First, the apparent contradictions may be resolved by greater precision about what aspects of prime-ministerial power are affected by the nature of party-government – policy-initiating or personnel selection. Thus we can deduce obvious conclusions such as that, *ceteris paribus*, prime ministers heading minority governments have limited legislative-initiation capacity, whereas prime ministers heading majority governments have more extensive freedom in selecting ministerial personnel. Second, the direction in which the form of party-government affects prime-ministerial power may be primarily reducible to one variable: party cohesion or discipline.

It would be absurd to pretend that the variable of 'party cohesion' operates entirely independently of the state of inter-party competition or the electoral system; but it would be equally foolish to deny it autonomous significance. All parties in Ireland are affected by STV in ways which encourage 'localism', 'clientelism' and lack of 'legislative activity'. Deputies fight their colleagues as well as other parties' candidates to safeguard their seats. These consequences of the electoral system increase the power of the executive at the expense of producing a good ministerial cadre, but STV affects all Irish parties' intra-governmental systems. This constraint on the calibre of ministers available to Irish premiers may be most interesting in a cross-national perspective, but domestically it matters more to enquire whether the internal governance of the parties which choose prime ministers varies systematically in ways which affect prime-ministerial power. Until 1966 Fianna Fáil's cohesion and internal discipline were legendary, but since then have broken down, weakening both Lynch and Haughey. Its extensive mass-mobilisation of members and its widespread degree of formal internal

democracy⁵⁶ give greater scope for mobilisation of the extra-parliamentary party in faction-fighting. The pressure the extra-parliamentary party can put on sitting deputies is formidable, and probably explains Haughey's survival as leader. Party structure, history and 'community of belonging'⁵⁷ thus constrain Fianna Fáil leaders much as they do the leaders of European social democratic or labour parties. By contrast until 1977 Fine Gael was a party of notables, with little extensive organisation or internal democracy. Since FitzGerald reorganised the party membership has increased and ancillary organisations have developed. However, its national executive is easier for the party leader to control than for a Fianna Fáil leader. Yet although FitzGerald gradually was able to consolidate his control over the extra-parliamentary party, and encourage the selection of favoured candidates for winnable seats, he was nevertheless constrained by the continuing significance of the 'notable' mentality among older fine Gael deputies. We might thus suggest that through classifying intra-party government on two criteria – scale (mass or notable) and decision-making (participatory or closed) – we could predict the degree of likely differences in party-discipline, and thereby the latter's impact on prime-ministerial power.

Through exploring the nature of party-government and intra-party government we can generate a matrix of prime-ministerial situations and predictions about their power: on one dimension is the form of party government (sub-divided into single-party majority, single-party minority, coalition-majority and coalition-minority governments); on the other the form of intra-party government within the prime minister's own party (mass/participatory, mass/closed, notable/closed, notable/participatory).⁵⁸ However, rather than exhaustively explore the resulting 16 cells, and develop a repertoire of corresponding predictions, let us briefly examine whether such a typology is beneficial in examining Irish prime-ministerial power under coalition governments.

There have been six periods of coalition government in independent Ireland. Two were minority governments (1954–57, 1981–82), and the current government has exactly half the membership of the Dáil. The Fine Gael-led minority coalitions both proved rather short-lived; and their *Taoisigh* spent much time sustaining their legislative position. The current coalition government is in much a stronger position because it enjoys the support of the largest party, and its opponents are extensively divided. The first inter-party government of 1948–51 was an office-seeking majority coalition of 'all the rest', or as the Fianna Fáil propagandist Frank Gallagher put it 'a coalition between a dying dog [Fine Gael] and its fleas'. The *Taoiseach*, Costello, was doubly weakened by not being the parliamentary head of his party, and by having to share a great deal of power with the leaders of the two next largest parties: MacBride, the leader of Clann na Poblachta and minister of External Affairs, and Norton, the Labour Party leader, *Tánaiste* and minister for Social Welfare. Ministers were shared out proportionally between parties, including the right to appoint the ministers. Thus departments became party fiefdoms and governmental fragmentation was extensive: after Labour's minister of Local Government died the parliamentary Labour Party held a meeting to elect his successor,

and their choice was accepted by the *Taoiseach* and passed to the president for ratification: when MacBride left the country he left his department in charge of his party colleague Noel Browne, the minister for Health; and after Browne became embroiled in controversy with the Catholic Church MacBride demanded his resignation which was subsequently approved by the *Taoiseach*. Collective responsibility also broke down, and ministers frequently spoke in public in their personal capacities, although efforts were made to maintain a united front after cabinet decisions had been reached. The invocation of cabinet committees became much more extensive in order to resolve matters before full meetings of the cabinet. However, the *Taoiseach* was responsible for a major initiative, which appeared to be made 'on the hoof' while in Canada: the declaration that Ireland would be a Republic and leave the British Commonwealth, a policy confirmed by statute in 1949. Yet even this initiative can be seen as a coalition policy, albeit as a by-product of competition within the coalition: Fine Gael, Clann na Poblachta and Labour were all keen to show that they could be as, if not more, 'republican' than Fianna Fáil. The second inter-party government, also led by Costello, was an office-seeking coalition tempered by experience. Costello was less passive, but in a managerial rather than policy-initiating sense, as might be expected given the government's minority status. The two majority coalition governments of Labour and Fine Gael (1974–77, and 1982–87) were by contrast with the minority coalition governments much longer-lived. They were based on albeit temporary, programmatic/ideological agreements. Instead of the allocation of ministries on a proportional basis, as in the inter-party governments, Labour was over-represented in both the Cosgrave and the FitzGerald coalitions to emphasise the agreement on policy, and to keep Labour sweet. The Fine Gael prime ministers had free hands over their own party colleagues but not over the Labour ministers, much as one might expect. Most of the major personnel difficulties faced by Cosgrave and FitzGerald were inter-party rather than intra-party.

This thumbnail run-through of coalition governments illustrates how the type of party-government and the nature of intra-party government crucially shapes the role-expectations and behaviour of *Taoisigh*, irrespective of their personalities, which suggests the utility of developing the typology sketched above.

CONCLUSION

It is reasonable to reach five conclusions about *An Taoiseach*. Within his own political system the Irish prime minister is potentially more powerful than any other European prime minister, with the exception of his British counterpart. In a unitary system with a weak head of state he heads an executive which in general enjoys great power over the legislature. However, together with his Government he is more constrained by a codified constitution and an autonomous judiciary than his British equivalent. Second, the *Taoiseach's* ability to fulfil his policy-initiating role autonomously within the government is primarily determined by

party-government variables. Majority and minority governments, and single party or coalition governments differentially affect prime-ministerial power: over both policy-initiation and personnel. However, a *Taoiseach's* discretionary capacities are also independently determined by the nature of intra-party government. Mass and notable parties differ, as do democratic and oligarchic ones in their consequences for party leaders. Moreover, contrary to the folk wisdom which treats Fianna Fáil as a party of almost Stalinist discipline, Fianna Fáil leaders are in principle more vulnerable to faction than Fine Gael ones, precisely because of their party's mass and participatory characteristics – although both parties are now increasingly converging on a similar form. Third, although at present we lack sufficient inductive evidence from key decision-making studies and applications of the political science models to Irish government, both the 'segmented decision-making' and 'ministerial government' conceptions encapsulate the policy-making style of most Irish governments. Fourth, there is as yet no reasonable basis on which to conclude that Irish prime-ministerial power is on a long-term upward trend. The constitutional status of the *Taoiseach* has been stable since 1937. The absence of a majority single-party government since 1981, headed by a party leader enjoying widespread support within his party and the wider electorate, suggests no upward dynamic. Finally, prime-ministerial power in all its ramifications may well be affected by circumstance and personality – although few tell us how with any precision. However, it remains more 'scientific', albeit non-quantifiably so, to conclude that the ebbs and flows of prime-ministerial power are above all affected by the role-expectations consequent upon party and electoral systems, the type of party-government led by the prime minister and the nature of intra-party governance within the prime minister's own party.

NOTES

1. J.A. Murphy, 'The Achievement of Éamon de Valera' in J.P. O'Carroll and J.A. Murphy, *De Valera and His Times* (Cork: University Press, 1983), p.13.
2. I do not discuss the differences between heads of state and chief executives in the revolutionary Sinn Féin governments.
3. 'The Blueshirts are frequently described as fascists. They were not. Fascism was far too intellectually demanding for the bulk of the Blueshirts' – J.J. Lee, *Ireland 1912–85: Politics and Society* (Cambridge: University Press, 1989), p.181.
4. See notes 2 and 3 attached to Table 1.
5. See B. O'Leary and J. Peterson, 'Further Europeanization and Realignment: The Irish General Election, June 1989', *West European Politics* Vol.13, No.1 (1990), 124–36, and B. Farrell, 'Forming the Government' in Michael Gallagher and Richard Sinnott (eds.), *How Ireland Voted* (Galway: PSNI Press, 1990), pp.179–91.
6. B. Farrell, *Chairman or Chief? The Role of Taoiseach in Irish Government* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1971).
7. B. Farrell, *Seán Lemass* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983).

8. B. Chubb, *Cabinet Government in Ireland* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1974).
9. S. O'Byrnes, *Hiding behind a Face: Fine Gael under FitzGerald* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1980) and R. Smith, *Garra: The Enigma* (Dublin: Aherlow Publications, 1985).
10. N. Browne, *Against the Tide* (Dublin, 1986) and G. Hussey, *At the Cutting Edge: Cabinet Diaries 1982–1987* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1990) – both of whom were single-term ministers. Slight publications by J.J. Walsh and K. Boland cannot be counted as memoirs.
11. Interview with Dr. FitzGerald, Dublin, 14 June 1989.
12. Splendid muck-raking can be found in J. Joyce and P. Murtagh's *The Boss: Charles J. Haughey in Government* (Dublin: Poolbeg Press, 1983); and dreadful hagiography in J. M. Feehan's *Operation Brogue: A Study of the Vification of Charles Haughey* (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1984) and his *The Statesman: A Study of Charles Haughey in the Ireland of the Future* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1985). A more discriminating study can be found in T. Ryle Dwyer's *Charlie: The Political Biography of Charles J. Haughey* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1987), and an enormous compendium of the subject's output is available in M. Mansergh (ed.), *The Spirit of the Nation: the Speeches and Statements of Charles J. Haughey (1957–1986)* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1986).
13. B. Farrell, 'Ireland: The Irish Cabinet System: More British than the British Themselves', in Jean Blondel and F. Müller-Rommel (eds.), *Cabinets in Western Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp.33–46.
14. Farrell, *Chairman or Chief?*
15. Seán MacBride, former IRA Chief of Staff, and later Minister believed that most high-ranking civil servants were 'British secret service agents' (R. Fanning, *Independent Ireland* (Dublin: Helicon 19xx), p.166).
16. Interview with Brian Lenihan, *Tánaiste*, 18 October 1989.
17. See Seán Lemass, 'Lemass on Government', *Leagas*, No.12 (1968).
18. See M. Ó Muinnheachain, 'The Functions of the Department of the *Taoiseach*', *Administration*, Vol.7, No.4 (1959), 277–93.
19. Farrell's survey of five *Taoisigh* concludes that they behaved more as chairmen than as chiefs (1971, op. cit. pp.82–6). However, he has since qualified his judgement (1988, op. cit., p.45).
20. Dail Debates, 14 November 1937, col.348.
21. Farrell, *Chairman or Chief*, op. cit. p.39.
22. *Ibid.* p.30.
23. Chubb, *Cabinet Government in Ireland*, p.49.
24. Hussey, *At the Cutting Edge* p.6.
25. D. Walsh, *The Party: Inside Fianna Fáil* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1986), p.52.
26. Interview with Dr FitzGerald, 14 June 1989.
27. Cited in D. Gwynn Morgan, *Constitutional Law of Ireland: The Law of the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary* (Dublin: The Round Hall Press, 1985), p.58.
28. I draw on *Constitution of Saoirseal Eireann* (Dublin: Government Publications), *Bunreacht na hÉireann* (Dublin: Government Publications), J. Casey, *Constitutional Law in Ireland* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, 1987, pp.139–154, B. Doolan, *Constitutional Law and Constitutional Rights in Ireland* (Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 1988), pp.86–96, J.M. Kelly, *The Irish Constitution* (Dublin: Jurist Publishing Co., 1980), pp.127–56, M. Forde *Constitutional Law of Ireland* (Cork: Mercier Press, 1987), pp.129–32, and Morgan 1985 op. cit. pp.54–63.
29. B. Farrell, *The Founding of Dail Eireann: Parliament and Nation Building* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1971), p.68.
30. This power has been used twice. In 1980–81 FitzGerald caused resentment by appointing Professor James Dooge (who had never been a deputy) a Senator and designate minister for Foreign Affairs.
31. The *Taoiseach's* resignation produces the Government's resignation, but provision is made for a caretaker Government (Article 28.11.1)
32. The Council of State includes current office-holders, certain past office-holders, and not

- more than seven presidential appointees. It advises but cannot determine presidential action.
33. See M. Gallagher, 'The Presidency of the Republic of Ireland: Implications of the 'Donegan Affair', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (1977), 375-84.
 34. B. Chubb, *The Government and Politics of Ireland* (London: Longman, 1982), p. 200.
 35. B. Farrell, 'The Constitution and the Institutions of Government: Constitutional Theory, and Political Practice', in F. Litton (ed.), *The Constitution of Ireland, 1937-87*, special issue of *Administration*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (1937), p. 163.
 36. J. M. Kelly, (with G. W. Hogan and G. Whyte) 'Supplement' to the *The Irish Constitution*, 2nd ed. (Dublin: Jurist Publishing Co. 1987).
 37. See *inter alia* Casey, op. cit., pp. 179-85; M. Gallagher, 'The Simple European Act Referendum', *Irish Political Studies* 3 (1988), 77-82; G. Hogan, 'Tenth Amendment of the Constitution Act 1987' *JCLSA*, No. 1, pp. 3-6; and Kelly *et al.*, 'Supplement', pp. 35-43.
 38. Chubb, *Government and Politics*, p. 202.
 39. Lee, *Ireland 1912-85*, pp. 390, 399, 402, 406 and *passim*.
 40. Jack Lynch, 'My Life and Times', *Magill*, 1979, 3, 2, p. 40 (cited in Lee, op. cit. p. 388).
 41. Conor Cruise O'Brien (cited in Walsh, *The Party inside Fianna Fail*, p. 100).
 42. *Le Monde* recently portrayed Haughey as a 'Hamboyant adventurer', 'like Richard Nixon . . . a survival artist', whose three great passions are 'politics, women and horses.' *The Irish Times*, 10 Feb. 1990.
 43. Joyce and Murtagh, *The Ross*, pp. 68-9. In fact Haughey had vigorously repressed the IRA as a justice minister.
 44. T. Lyne, 'The Progressive Democrats', *Irish Political Studies* 2 (1987) pp. 107-114.
 45. W. O'Brien, 'Garret Fitzgerald and the Fine Gael Party' in J. Dooge (ed.), *Ireland in the Contemporary World: Essays in Honour of Garret Fitzgerald* (Dublin, Gill & Macmillan, 1986), pp. 37-42.
 46. Major exceptions are R. Fisk's study of de Valera's management of Irish neutrality in the Second World War (*In Time of War: Ireland, Ulster and the Price of Neutrality* (London: André Deutsch, 1983)), and R. Fanning's studies of the Irish government's decisions not to join NATO and its application for UN membership (see *Irish Studies in International Affairs*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1986), pp. 35-62). The former study suggests that key ministers, notably Atken, affected de Valera's thinking.
 47. J. Bowman, *De Valera and the Ulster Question, 1917-73* (Oxford: University Press, 1982), p. 6.
 48. According to a former Foreign Affairs official other departments welcomed the advent of EC membership because it weakened their subordination to the Department of Finance.
 49. N. Hardiman, *Pay, Politics and Economic Performance in Ireland 1970-87* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).
 50. Fanning's history of the Ministry of Finance does not enable us to assess its contemporary power. *The Irish Department of Finance, 1922-58* (Dublin: Institute of Public Administration, 1978).
 51. P. Dunleavy and R. A. W. Rhodes, 'Core Executive Studies in Britain', *Public Administration* Vol. 68, No. 1 (1990), pp. 3-28.
 52. G. W. Jones, 'Development of the Cabinet' in W. Thornhill (ed.), *The Modernization of British Government* (London: Pitman, 1975).
 53. J. Dunne, 'The Politics of Institutional Reform in Ireland: Lessons of the 1982-87 Government', *Irish Political Studies*, 4, pp. 1-20.
 54. Interview with Dr Fitzgerald, 14 June 1989.
 55. G. Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems* (Cambridge: University Press, 1976), pp. 192-201.
 56. P. Mair, *The Changing Irish Party System* (London: Frances Pinter, 1987), pp. 96-7.
 57. A. Panehianco, *Political Parties: Organization and Power* (Cambridge: University Press, 1988).
 58. We could also add a variable to deal with the intra-party government of the prime minister's coalition partner(s).

West European Prime Ministers in Perspective

G. W. Jones

A country-by-country approach to the study of prime ministers reveals a picture of great diversity. Each prime-ministerial system is unique, shaped by the distinctive historical experiences, political cultures, constitutions, conventions and practices of the particular country. As Richard Rose argues, 'differences between national political institutions create more variation in the office of prime minister than do differences of personalities and circumstances within a country'. The former are more stable and consistent than the latter.

However, this volume shows that a comparative approach to prime ministers can lead to conclusions relevant for more than one country, especially if analysis is focused on the resources possessed by prime ministers. These resources may, however, turn out to be constraints, because many of them arise from various linkages: prime ministers have with others who also have resources. Since they possess their own resources, they are 'power-centres' in their own right. Power is a relationship, involving as well as the prime minister at least one other entity or person, enjoying a share of the same resource. Both actors constrain the other, since each needs the other. The resources of one cut into the resources of another.

In addition, different actors possess different amounts of different resources. In France, Robert Elgie and Howard Machin point out, president and prime minister each possesses resources vital to the other: the president has 'enormous political resources . . . as a party and majority coalition leader', and the prime minister has 'very considerable administrative and institutional resources'. Prime ministers possess their set of resources and are caught up in a network of linkages with other institutions and individuals who have their own resources.

Because a resource can also be a constraint, since others have their bundle of resources too, it is impossible to measure the power of prime ministers by weighing their possession of different amounts of different resources. The power of the prime minister is affected by the other actors the prime minister is dealing with; so it is fruitless to seek to calculate precisely how much resources each prime minister has, let alone to compare the amount held by one prime minister with that of another. Since power involves a relationship between at least two actors, the power of each is elastic, capable of expansion and contraction, depending on each side of the equation and the circumstances in which they operate. A resource is not a solid object that can be picked up. It has to be seen in relation to what others have. That is why many statements about the power of prime ministers have to be couched in tentative phrases, frequently using the word 'may'. Resources belong to the office and to the person. The office of prime