Does France have a weak Assemblée nationale?

A study of députés activity 1967-2002

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1 I would like to thank Mareya and Clemence Labrouche for their help.
The primary goal of this article is to try to clarify the main constraints affecting the effective capacities of deputies within the National Assembly, thereby allowing the real power of the French Assembly to be assessed. It might seem a little odd to be raising this question, since it is commonly considered that, because of the Fifth Republic’s internal organisation, the French Parliament is, per se, a weak partner. It must be borne in mind that the constitution of the Fifth Republic, which was drawn up in 1958 under the guidance of de Gaulle, was intended to create a system that would banish the instability of the Fourth Republic. Clearly defined attributions of powers, especially those concerning the executive, were designed to play an essential part in ensuring a smooth transition. As Huber (1996) remarks, the transition from the Fourth to the Fifth Republic provides a dramatic historical example of how changing the rules of a democracy can change the performance of that democracy. The success of the Fifth Republic is generally attributed to two main factors. The first, the existence of a strong president, was uppermost in the eyes of its founder, Charles de Gaulle. The second, the establishment of le parlementarisme rationalisé, was to secure the government’s position by a panoply of institutional arrangements. These two factors explain why, under the Fifth Republic, the National Assembly is often regarded as one of the weakest legislatures in any modern democracy. Yet such a perception is based on a traditional vision of political systems, one which highlights the dichotomy between executive and legislative power. This traditional dichotomy, which de facto underestimates the perspectives open to members of western Parliaments, needs to be complemented by new theoretical approaches, such as the notion of “veto player” (Tsebelis, 2002).

A study of the real influence – if not power - of French deputies seems especially important. Such an analysis would also be a way to measure the strength of the French National Assembly as a whole, by taking into account all the dimensions of deputies’ legislative activity. This work needs doing, since most of the surveys on the subject of Parliament in France, and more specifically those dealing with the National Assembly, are either old or incomplete (Cayrol et al. 1973, Aquaviva, 1997). A study of amendments as well as private members’ initiatives, based on our individual-oriented approach, provides a useful way to envision the activity of deputies. Let us make clear that we will not focus specifically in this article on the role of the French government in legislative agenda-setting but investigate, rather, the way deputies try to influence legislative outcomes.

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2 John Huber adds that “the rules included in the Constitution to strengthen the French government against the legislature seem formidable. The Constitution contains provisions that grant control of the legislative agenda to the government, that limit the right of deputies to submit and vote amendments, that limit opportunities for deputies to gain information and expertise, and that even limit opportunities for members of parliament to vote on bills themselves. Since these rules of legislative procedure were actually placed in the Constitution, the members of parliament cannot easily change or get rid of them”. For a detailed presentation of these institutional arrangements see annexe 1.

3 For more details see Kerrouche (2004).

4 Details of governmental restrictive rules will be given when necessary.
Before focusing on this, however, it is necessary to stress briefly the specificity of the political context during the chosen study period (1967-2002), which can be divided into two sub-periods.

The first, from 1967 to 1981, is part of the “classical epoch” of the Fifth Republic. The study period begins just before the resignation of the Republic’s founder, Charles de Gaulle. The first three years, 1967 to 1969, are important for France because of the social upheavals of 1968 and because of the resignation of the head of the state in 1969 after a failed referendum. From 1969 to 1980, France had two presidents: Georges Pompidou and then, after his death, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing. If Pompidou was clearly an heir of de Gaulle, Giscard d’Estaing was to mark the beginning of a new era. As far as the French National Assembly is concerned, the whole sub-period is clearly dominated by right forces. Nevertheless the end of this period, 1974-1981, is marked by one major feature: although the president who was elected in 1974 - Valéry Giscard d’Estaing - was no longer a member of the Gaullist party, this remained the leading party. At that time the Right coalition still had a clear-cut majority at the National Assembly. The resignation, however, of Jacques Chirac in 1976, with his subsequent conquest of the Gaullist movement, were to trigger a period of guerrilla warfare between the biggest majority party in Parliament and the two Barre governments (1976-1981).

The second sub-period is somewhat distinct: the era beginning in 1981 constitutes a brand-new chapter of the Fifth Republic’s “non classical” period. It marked the first true Alternance, that is to say the victory of the left coalition, thanks to the election of François Mitterrand in 1981. Since then each legislative election has provided a new alternance between left and right and, as a result, has left France with a new, previously unknown political phenomenon: cohabitation, the co-existence of an incumbent president and a majority of the opposite hue elected to the National Assembly. Thus both the Prime Minister and his government are of the same stripe. Even if many articles have been written on this subject, it still seems necessary to spell out exactly what this implies (Chagnollaud, Quermonne, 2000). Normally, the President, directly elected by the French people since 1965, is the most prominent political figure. It is he who has the complete authority to set policies in motion. It is quite obvious that during these “normal” periods the prime minister – and his government - can only be subordinate, as many historical examples have amply demonstrated: Jacques Chaban-Delmas’ resignation in 1972, or that of Jacques Chirac, four years later. Conversely, in the case of cohabitation the President loses his ability to impulse policies but, thanks to several constitutional dispositions, as well as the legitimacy given to him directly by the people, he has full authority to delay or block any initiative. It is not really necessary to stress that any fight between the two sides of the executive was often tough and rarely characterized by fair play. The consequence of such a situation is that, during cohabitation, cooperation between the Prime Minister and his majority at the Assembly has to be rock solid.

The following table shows successive governments from 1967 to 2002, their political tendencies and those of each president concerned. The last two columns depict the political situation of the government and the political colour of the National Assembly.

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5 French jurists use this expression to characterize the end of the Gaullists’ reign (1958-1974). Our study begins in 1967, with the third legislature, and not in 1958, for two main reasons. First, at the beginning of the Fifth Republic, the party regime was not stabilized, making any comparison with the rest of the period rather difficult. Second, our main source, the Bulletin de l’Assemblée nationale (cf. infra), does not provide as much data as it does after 1967.

6 Valéry Giscard d’Estaing was considered a “traitor” by de Gaulle supporters because he did not lend all his weight to the 1969 Referendum campaign that was to lead to the resignation of the first president of the Fifth Republic.

7 The RPR (Rassemblement pour la République) was founded in 1977; Jacques Chirac would become its First Secretary.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature number</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Prime minister's political tendency</th>
<th>President's political tendency</th>
<th>Government's situation in the National Assembly</th>
<th>National Assembly Majority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>01/04/1967 to 10/07/1968</td>
<td>Georges Pompidou Right</td>
<td>Charles de Gaulle Right</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>10/07/1968 to 20/06/1969</td>
<td>Maurice Couve de Murville / Right</td>
<td>Charles de Gaulle Right</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>20/06/1969 to 5/07/1972</td>
<td>Jacques Chaban-Delmas / Right</td>
<td>Georges Pompidou Right</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>5/07/1972 to 28/03/1973</td>
<td>Pierre Messmer I Right</td>
<td>Georges Pompidou Right</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>2/04/1973 to 27/02/1974</td>
<td>Pierre Messmer II Right</td>
<td>Georges Pompidou Right</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>27/02/1974 to 27/05/1974</td>
<td>Pierre Messmer III Right</td>
<td>Georges Pompidou Right</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>27/05/1974 to 25/08/1976</td>
<td>Jacques Chirac Right</td>
<td>Valéry Giscard D’Estaing/ Right</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>25/08/1976 to 29/03/1977</td>
<td>Raymond Barre I Right</td>
<td>Valéry Giscard D’Estaing/ Right</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>29/03/1977 to 31/03/1978</td>
<td>Raymond Barre II Right</td>
<td>Valéry Giscard D’Estaing/ Right</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>3/04/1978 to 13/05/1981</td>
<td>Raymond Barre III Right</td>
<td>Valéry Giscard D’Estaing/ Right</td>
<td>Weak majority</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>21/05/1981 to 22/06/1981</td>
<td>Pierre Mauroy I Left</td>
<td>François Mitterrand Socialist/Left</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>22/06/1981 to 22/03/1983</td>
<td>Pierre Mauroy II Left</td>
<td>François Mitterrand Socialist/Left</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>22/03/1983 to 17/07/1984</td>
<td>Pierre Mauroy III Left</td>
<td>François Mitterrand Socialist/Left</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>17/07/1984 to 20/06/1986</td>
<td>Laurent Fabius Left</td>
<td>François Mitterrand Socialist/Left</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>20/06/1986 to 10/05/1988</td>
<td>Jacques Chirac Right</td>
<td>François Mitterrand Socialist/Left</td>
<td>Weak majority</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>10/05/1988 to 14/06/1988</td>
<td>Michel Rocard Left</td>
<td>François Mitterrand Socialist/Left</td>
<td>Relative majority</td>
<td>Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>14/06/1988 to 15/05/1991</td>
<td>Michel Rocard Left</td>
<td>François Mitterrand Socialist/Left</td>
<td>Relative majority</td>
<td>Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>15/05/1991 to 2/04/1992</td>
<td>Edith Cresson Left</td>
<td>François Mitterrand Socialist/Left</td>
<td>Relative majority</td>
<td>Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>2/04/1992 to 29/03/1993</td>
<td>Pierre Beregovoy Left</td>
<td>François Mitterrand Socialist/Left</td>
<td>Relative majority</td>
<td>Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>29/03/1993 to 10/05/1995</td>
<td>Edouard Balladur Left</td>
<td>François Mitterrand Socialist/Left</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>10/05/1995 to 17/05/1995</td>
<td>Alain Juppé Right</td>
<td>Jacques Chirac RPR/Right</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>17/05/1995 to 7/11/1995</td>
<td>Alain Juppé Right</td>
<td>Jacques Chirac Right</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI</td>
<td>7/11/1995 to 2/06/1997</td>
<td>Alain Juppé Right</td>
<td>Jacques Chirac Right</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI</td>
<td>2/06/1997 to 18/06/2002</td>
<td>Lionel Jospin Left</td>
<td>Jacques Chirac Right</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII</td>
<td>25/06/2002</td>
<td>Jean-Pierre Raffarin Right</td>
<td>Jacques Chirac Right</td>
<td>Strong majority</td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second table summarizes the political situation at the National Assembly for the same period.

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8 The shaded parts indicate the *cohabitation* periods.
9 Since the data of the last period (2002-2005) are neither fully available nor complete, they have been excluded from our dataset.
The grey cells represent the coalition in power. Solid grey represents the core coalition, while light grey represents temporary allies. It is very easy to determine each member of the coalition at the beginning of the period – especially because of the domination of Right parties from 1958 until 1981\(^\text{11}\) - but it becomes a little more complicated from 1988 to 1997. Already, in 1986, Chirac’s government majority was weak, but it benefited from the fact that there was strong opposition between the left and the extreme right. Indeed, from 1988 to 1993, the Socialist party had only a relative majority. The goal of President François Mitterrand was to open his majority to the centre: this tactic failed, however, even if there were several non-Socialist ministers in Rocard’s governments. The support of the Communist party during that period was not as strong as it had been, with Communist deputies voting against the Socialist government on several bills. One of the most significant examples of this is when the Communists voted with the right parties in a motion of no confidence in Rocard’s government in 1990.

During the same legislature a new parliamentary group, the Union du centre (Centre union), was created. This was one the first indications of the Right’s internal crisis. Equally, during this legislature, the government was essentially based on the Socialist party, sometimes helped by ad hoc alliances on bills, depending on their subject. Most of the time the governments had the support of the Communist party or, sometimes, that of the UDC or, even, the UDF. This is why, in the table above, the cells indicating those parts are coloured in blue, indicating thereby that the majority at the National Assembly was changeable. We have added a dark blue cell for the Communist party, because it remained the natural ally of the Socialist governments. From 1993 to 1997, during the following legislature, the Left

\(^{10}\) For each main tendency, Left and Right, some column contains more than one acronym, because the party in question experimented with several names during the period considered. The meaning of the initials for the Left forces: PC = Parti communiste (Communist party), PS = Parti socialiste (Socialist party), the heir of FGDS (Fédération de la gauche démocrate et socialiste) and PSRG (Parti socialiste et radicaux de gauche), RCV = Radical, citoyen, Verts (which includes the French Greens). For the Centre and Right forces: PDM = Progrès et démocratie moderne (Centre Right), UDF = Union pour la démocratie française (Centre Right) which is the heir of RI (républicains indépendants), UDC = Union du centre (centre right, which is a result of the fragmentation of the UDF), RL = République et Liberté (Centre right, resulting from the fragmentation of the UDF), RPR = Rassemblement pour la République (Right), FN = Front national (Extreme Right); the “Others” category is made up of MPs who do not belong to a party.

\(^{11}\) Even if they were not always included in the majority, PDM members (1967-1973) and then RDS/RCDS members (1973-1978) usually voted in favour of the government.
forces suffered such a huge defeat that Balladur’s government had not the slightest problem in obtaining a majority. The last legislature involved, once again, a period of cohabitation between a substantial Left majority in the National Assembly, and a President weakened by his misuse of dissolution. Jacques Chirac, when he used the article 11 of the French constitution, hoped he could get a clear-cut majority. The results of the election in 1997 were exactly the inverse, and only the elections in 2002 were to lead to a “normal” situation, with a president and a prime minister of the same tendency. This brief overview explains why it is particularly interesting to take the whole period into account: to study both the “classical” and the “pathological” form of the Fifth Republic. Indeed, during the cohabitation period, the founding rules of the French Republic were called into question. Cohabitation emerges as a brand-new configuration in which government and Parliament must work together against the nationally-elected president. Moreover, the succession of alternances, of governments with weak, strong or relative majorities at the National Assembly, give rise to interesting configurations which can be used to explore the relationships between governments and deputies in a variety of circumstances.

Mattson (1995) has described the methodological difficulties involved when working on private members’ initiatives: the influence of formal and informal rules; the effect of restrictions on the rights to initiate legislation; the trouble to identify whether or not an initiative is purely individual. Although an analysis of deputy activity is somewhat tricky, it is possible to evaluate a part of it, even if the explanations do not pretend to be exhaustive. In this article, we have chosen to focus on several questions:

Is it possible to determine the impact of political background on the National Assembly legislative process?

Is there a way to discern a changing level of constraints exercised on deputies during this period?

Do we have to consider that legislative practices are necessarily similar over time and within each political party?

Last, but not least, because this point runs throughout our whole study, is the “legislative process” a good way to study the influence of deputies and, equally, is it possible to find indicators that are sufficiently robust to summarize the main evolutions?

I) Main observations

This article is based on a dataset collected at the French National Assembly library. All the figures come from the National Assembly’s report, the Bulletin de l’Assemblée nationale, an annual brochure recording each year’s legislative process. Over the years these brochures have provided more and more details; we have, however, only retained data whose validity covers the whole period of our study. As these brochures give a great deal of information, the following points have been selected12:

Private member bills, or propositions de loi, (submitted by majority and minority deputies); government bills; government amendments; amendments proposed by majority and minority deputies; committee

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12 For restrictive procedures see Huber (1996) and annexe at the end of the present article.
amendments; adopted amendments (committees, majority and minority deputies); withdrawn amendments; proportion of adopted amendments by bill; calls to order.

These elements have been selected both as an indirect way of measuring the level of conflict between the National Assembly and the Government, and of determining how this has varied over time. This also allows the degree of freedom open to deputies to be evaluated. It is necessary to point out that an analysis of the bills put forward and that of amendment data suffers from real limitations. For example, it is obvious that big bills are subjected to more amendments than small bills. Merely counting the number of amendments does not take into account the substantive content of those amendments. A single amendment could result in greater substantive change to a government bill than a long series of amendments. But, even bearing these limitations in mind, it seems quite likely that policy conflict is greatest in the case of the most heavily amended bills. The number of private member bills, especially those from minority deputies, besides being a reasonable proxy to measure the confrontation level between government and minority deputies, is also a way to reveal the political control of the government over its majority deputies.

To introduce this part, we would like remark that the conflict level is clearly connected with the political context of each legislature, as shown in the figure below. The very first indicator of this phenomenon, however trivial it may be, is the number of calls to order. During the legislative debate a deputy may claim that the discussion is in contradiction with the National Assembly’s rules of order, and such a position suspends the debate. When there is no obvious rule of order involved, the National Assembly president may stop the deputy. So a call to order can be justified, but it may also be seen as an obstructive move.\footnote{Article 58 of the National Assembly’s regulations defines this procedure.}

\textit{Figure 1 - Number of calls to order}

If one considers a call to order as an indirect indicator of the level of conflict between government and deputies, then the more a deputy uses this procedure, the more he tries to slow down the legislative process. In accordance with this observation, the period has been divided into two. The first sub-period is the Fifth Republic’s classical age, 1967-1981, with its limited number of annual calls to order, even if a slight increase appears at the end of the period. This bears out the effective influence of a government over its deputies as a result of party discipline. Throughout the second sub-period, the
number of calls to order tend to boom, especially in time of cohabitation. In the first such cohabitation period, between 1986 and 1988, the first cohabitation phase, the figures are extremely high. It is clear in this case that both the proximity of the coming presidential election, and the weak majority of the government at the National Assembly, produced serious confrontations between Left and Right. By contrast, the second cohabitation can be seen as a relatively quiet period. One can also observe that tension was higher at the beginning of each legislature, and also within each legislature when there was a new government and a new Prime Minister (see, especially, Fabius in 1984 and Cresson in 1991). This influence of the conflict level is also visible in bills and amendment proposals.

I.1 Legislative initiative: Private member bills and government bills.

It should first be made clear that constraints on individual members in France are very strong, both as regards initiating legislation or amendments (Mattson). Moreover, as far as Private Members’ bills are concerned, individual members are not very effective as initiators of legislation in Western democracies (Nijink, 1995). It is, nonetheless, interesting to investigate this dimension, bearing in mind this limitation, because Private Members’ bills may well reveal other aspects of the legislative process.

If we now try to plot private member bills (whether merely proposed or adopted) during the period, we obtain the following chart.

Figure 2 - Private member bills (majority and opposition)
When comparing bars (proposals) and curves (bills accepted by the government) it is not surprising to find a huge gap between the two series. We found a large number of private member bills, but only a few these were finally accepted. It is also obvious that, even if accepted bills never exceed more than 10 percent of those proposed, there are strong variations according to legislatures. When we take a closer look at the graph, it is possible to distinguish between the Left and the Right when one of these is in office. Right deputies, whether they are in opposition or in the majority, tend to propose more bills than their opponents. Moreover, Right governments seem to adopt more private member bills than Left governments. This trend is illustrated in the table below:

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>Government Tendency</th>
<th>Private member bills</th>
<th>Adopted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Majority</td>
<td>Opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Left</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td>427</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>Left</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Right</td>
<td>1099</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI</td>
<td>Left</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>770</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally speaking, Right governments respond better to their deputies' demands in terms of private member bills. This is even more so when one considers private member bills by party, and not by coalition. It would be naïve, however, to consider this explanation alone. The French scholars, Duhamel and Parodi (1988), argue that, during the first cohabitation, the government at times encouraged private member to submit government bills in an effort to avoid review by the Council of State. If this explanation holds for both cohabitation periods, one should not forget the general tendency revealed by the table. Even in opposition, Right deputies tend to propose more bills than their Left colleagues, as the next chart clearly brings out.

Figure 3 - Private member bills by party
There is a strong dichotomy of practice between Left and Right deputies. RPR and UDF deputies make more proposals than Communist and Socialist deputies, whatever the political situation: majority or opposition. Conversely, Socialist deputies obviously dislike this procedure, since they generally tend to use it less than other governmental parties. This finding is rather interesting because, in most Western parliaments, introducing Private Members’ bills is essentially an activity for the members of minority parties (Mattson, 1995).

If we then consider coalitions, a graph representing the ratio of private member bills to government bill could well reveal a difference in a government’s attitude towards deputies. The hypothesis here is that, if a government wants its majority to play a stronger role in the legislative process, it should adopt more private member bills: in this case the proportion of government bills would decrease. As this indicator does not distinguish between majority and minority private members, it is possible to determine the general tolerance of each government towards private members’ proposals.

Figure 4 - Ratio of private member bills/government bills

The higher the ratio, the higher the place accorded to private member bills. But these stand for something different according to whether they are introduced at the beginning, or at the end, of a legislature. At the beginning they may symbolize the determination of the new majority to change policies and, on the part of the opposition, the intention to resist. This is why we should not insist too much on the beginning of each period. We know that Right deputies (see previous figure) are more willing than Left deputies to propose bills. This is practically the same for both Right and Left governments: the chart demonstrates that, ceteris paribus, Right governments (1986-1988; 1993-1997) are more open to private member bills (especially those of their own deputies) than are Left governments. The fact that they use private members to submit their own texts, however, only partly explains this tendency.

14 We choose to focus on the more conflictual period (1981-2002).
I-2-2 Amendments

An analysis of amendments during the same periods brings to light numerous other hidden points. As for bills, it seems that amendments are not systematically used in the same way, varying with deputies’ political colour and with each different legislature.

Figure 5 - Amendment proposals by political party

The chart suggests two main insights:

(i) The period can clearly be divided into two, before and after 1981. Before 1981, the amendment right was underused.

(ii) After 1981, amendments, as well as private member bills, became a privileged tool for the opposition to fight against the government. During each legislature the number of amendments proposed by opposition deputies is greater than those of the majority, even if there were strong contrasts within each particular legislature.

- From 1967 to 1981 the absolute number of amendments was weak, although there was a slight change after the 1978 legislative election.
- From 1981 to 1986 Right opposition parties (UDF and RPR) presented as many as three times more amendments than Left parties. During the first cohabitation period, 1986-1988, this was exactly the contrary. Socialist and Communist deputies proposed more amendments than their colleagues. The other two legislatures exhibited two other features that are clearly brought out by the shape of the curve.

- From 1988 to 1993, the Socialist party had a relative majority. Thus, when voting in the National Assembly, it relied on the vote of ad hoc majorities, depending on the nature of the bill. The chart above illustrates this situation.
• There is only a limited number of amendment proposals made by Socialists deputies, which can be read, in part, as supportive of Socialist governments helped, sometimes, by deputies from the Centre.

• When we consider amendment proposals as a proxy with which to evaluate the level of animosity towards the government, the Right’s deputies are far less aggressive than they were from 1981 to 1986.

• As far as Communist deputies are concerned there is also a noticeable evolution. The Communist party was no longer in the government between 1988 and 1993. From time to time, Communist deputies voted against the different governments. This is why the rate of Communists deputies’ amendment proposals varies greatly during that period. There is, however, one peak that needs to be explained: 5,348 amendments in 1990. 4,659 of these concerned one single bill. This dealt with a change in the status of Renault, involving a limited opening of its capital. Renault had long been the symbol of the French state’s involvement in the economy. Communist deputies did not want what they considered a radical change to occur, without a strong vetting of the government’s initial draft. It is, nevertheless, important to point out that only 51 Communist amendments were adopted that same year.

• From 1993 to 1997 the Right came back to office, but we need to distinguish two periods:
  ▪ The first, 1993-1995, was a cohabitation period. The Socialist party was heavily defeated in 1993. Only 57 Socialist deputies remained at the National Assembly, compared with 266 the previous year. The number of Socialist amendment proposals clearly indicates the way Socialists were ready to attack government policies, especially in the particular context of cohabitation.
  ▪ The second period, 1995-1997, concerns Juppé’s governments. The strong opposition between Left and Right is reflected in the volume of Left amendments. Tension was to run very high during debates on several symbolic projects, such as the reform of the French National Health Service, or when budgets were being considered.

• As for 1997 to 2002, this period represents the longest cohabitation period in France. Amendments became, once again, a privileged tool for the opposition in its fight against government policy. Right opposition was very high between 1997 and 2000 because of the firm will of the government to implement laws on a range of such sensitive and symbolic subjects as work-time reduction and welfare. The next chart sheds light on further distinctions.
The chart reveals four main tendencies:

(i) A clear-but not surprising-preference is given to amendments from majority deputies in both normal and cohabitation contexts

(ii) A better acceptance rate for when the majority at the National Assembly is clearcut

(iii) Not very surprisingly, a slight propensity towards a better acceptance of the opposition when the majority is weak or relative (1976/77; 1988/93).

(iv) As a rule of thumb, it seems that Left governments tend to accept amendments from their own deputies more easily than Right governments.

Another graph will help to illustrate this tendency

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15 This means that we have chosen not to include withdrawn amendments. Most of the time, in fact, these have only been withdrawn because deputies have either been convinced by government arguments or come to some arrangements with the government. The year 1990 is not an exception, even if the shape of the adopted majority curve is somewhat unusual. Communists deputies’ withdrawn amendments over the Renault’s bill explain the strong depression of the curve. This global trend is even more understandable when we consider the four main political parties.
The chart plainly illustrates several points:

Amendments allow minority deputies to express themselves, they also provide a means of intervening in the legislative process led by the government. Amendments, together with private member bills are, thus, two irreplaceable tools that enable minority deputies to “stay in the game”. Equally, the level of opposition varies strongly with each legislature. If we consider the amendment rate as a proxy to evaluate conflict level, there are strong contrasts throughout the period. Conflict level is low until 1981, which signals the beginning of a new era.

There were, too, surprisingly striking difference between Left and Right practice in this field. Bills and amendment proposals demonstrate that political work at the National Assembly is not seen in the same way by Left and Right forces.

1) There is a difference in the way deputies from either side conceive of their role. Right private member bill proposals exhibit two aspects. This could mean that Right deputies collaborate strongly with the government, accepting, for instance, to submit government bills on the floor. But, as indicated previously, the number of private member bills remains very high, not only when Right governments are in office, but also when Right parties are in the opposition. One may envisage this as demonstrating the determination of Right deputies either to propose alternative policies or to complement government policies with their own initiatives. Since our research programme is at its very beginning, this is a point that obviously needs more investigation. In opposition, such an explanation means that Left deputies are more willing to cooperate with left governments in order to change their policies from within. This means amending government bills, which considerably reduces the need to propose alternative texts.

2) The prevalent hypothesis tends to consider that the internal organisation of Left and Right parties within the French National Assembly is very dissimilar, being bound up with the way each party functions. The differences observed have to be connected with each political party’s history and “culture”. This would mean that we partly re-discover the distinction between mass parties (PS, PC) and others. Left party organisations are more disciplined than their Right counterparts. This would imply...
that the deputies of the Left prefer changing government bills by way of amendments, whereas those of the Right prefer using private member bills.

I-2-2 Political control over deputies

Another aspect of our study is to determine whether or not it is possible to measure a government’s “political control” over deputies during the legislative process. Strong political control means that a government tends to enforce its bills without substantive modifications, according only a purely marginal role to the deputies of its majority. It might be thought, in this case, that the political control exercised by Left governments would be higher than for Right governments. Quermonne and Chagnollaud (2000) argue that Left governments use more restrictive procedures than Right governments, whether their situation be one of strong, relative or weak majorities.

We have already pointed out that the amendment initiative in France is quite restrictive. In fact, the French government uses a variety of means to ensure strict control of the amendment procedure (Safran, 1991). One way to determine whether or not the government is open to its majority’s suggestions would be to count the number of amendments taken into consideration for all the bills. The next chart shows how bills are affected by amendments of all origins. Three categories are distinguished: unmodified bills, bills modified by 1 to 50 amendments, and bills modified by more than 50 amendments.

**Figure 8 - Proportion of amendments per bill and by legislature**

It is necessary to point out that if many bills are left untouched this is because their purpose does not allow them to be modified at all, especially in the case of laws enshrining international agreements.
As expected, the chart illustrates the domination of governments over the legislative process: during the whole period 40 to 57 percent of bills are left untouched. An array of this by legislature gives a better view of the evolution.

**Table 4 – Percentage of bill modification by legislature**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modifications</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>VI</th>
<th>VII</th>
<th>VIII</th>
<th>IX</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>XI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not modified</td>
<td>42.86%</td>
<td>44.44%</td>
<td>44.52%</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
<td>48.86%</td>
<td>53.07%</td>
<td>47.94%</td>
<td>54.57%</td>
<td>57.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>from 1 to 50</td>
<td>52.38%</td>
<td>51.06%</td>
<td>47.53%</td>
<td>43.70%</td>
<td>34.09%</td>
<td>39.66%</td>
<td>34.86%</td>
<td>32.90%</td>
<td>24.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 50</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td>4.49%</td>
<td>7.95%</td>
<td>6.30%</td>
<td>17.05%</td>
<td>7.26%</td>
<td>17.20%</td>
<td>12.53%</td>
<td>17.55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of bills</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>433</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bills that were changed by more than 50 amendments never exceeded more than 17.55%, except in 1993. It must be remembered that most of the adopted amendments came essentially from governments themselves, or from committees. Even if Left governments adopt more amendments than right governments, the proportion remains weak compared to unchanged bills. If we exclude this consideration it seems difficult, using this indicator, to draw the line between Left and Right on this particular topic. Nevertheless, only a study of restrictive procedures could give a better measure of political control.

The only readily observable phenomenon is the control of governments over legislative outcomes. This is normal if one thinks of all the procedures a government can use during debates and throughout the legislative process: restrictive procedures given by the constitutional text, but also by the National Assembly rules of order. In this respect, the change in the rules of the Assembly in 1995, designed to give Parliament a stronger role, has not yet changed this trend.

II “Visible” and “invisible” politics in the National Assembly

When speaking of the French political parties’ coalition in the 1978 election G. Tsebelis (1988) describes two kinds of politics: a visible one and an invisible one. It seems helpful to adapt this dichotomy for our present study. For the legislative process itself, the floor represents visible politics; but this visible aspect is probably less important than the invisible one, represented by committee work. Two different sorts of logic underlie these two arenas.

On the one hand, there are the rules of political confrontation that apply to the floor. Government and deputies, from the majority and the minority, play their roles and do what is expected of them. Deputies are political professionals, socialized in many ways by their careers, by the informal rules of political confrontation, and by the logic of majority and minority. Moreover, as the debates on the floor are open to the public and the media, the context is far from being neutral. In a way, oral questions addressed to the government every Wednesday are like a well-organised play between the government, its supporters and its opponents. We are not too far from the concept of team defined by Goffman (1973).

On the other hand, amendments in committee work are very different, as the next chart clearly shows.
### Table 5 - Adopted amendments and amendment proposals in committees\(^6\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Nb of Gvt amendments</th>
<th>Nb of Adopted Gvt amendments</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Nb of Committe amendments</th>
<th>Nb of adopted Committee amendments</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>86.6%</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>91.2%</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>83.1%</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>80.6%</td>
<td>1085</td>
<td>804</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>417</td>
<td>336</td>
<td>80.6%</td>
<td>1456</td>
<td>1005</td>
<td>69.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
<td>1057</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
<td>589</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>84.7%</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>416</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>74.6%</td>
<td>1508</td>
<td>957</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>75.6%</td>
<td>1166</td>
<td>755</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>83.4%</td>
<td>1261</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>79.4%</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>69.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>71.6%</td>
<td>906</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>69.4%</td>
<td>1003</td>
<td>856</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>1196</td>
<td>1051</td>
<td>87.9%</td>
<td>3133</td>
<td>2603</td>
<td>83.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>86.6%</td>
<td>2942</td>
<td>2625</td>
<td>89.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>780</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
<td>2640</td>
<td>2323</td>
<td>88.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>90.2%</td>
<td>2304</td>
<td>2082</td>
<td>90.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>91.9%</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>66.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>88.4%</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>776</td>
<td>78.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>318</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>85.8%</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>85.5%</td>
<td>1788</td>
<td>1477</td>
<td>82.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>1467</td>
<td>86.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>834</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>86.1%</td>
<td>2807</td>
<td>2362</td>
<td>84.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1077</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>78.5%</td>
<td>2769</td>
<td>2336</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>422</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>76.7%</td>
<td>1162</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>64.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>82.4%</td>
<td>1684</td>
<td>1195</td>
<td>71.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-1996</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>83.4%</td>
<td>1589</td>
<td>1173</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-1997</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>1531</td>
<td>1047</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>552</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>80.8%</td>
<td>2053</td>
<td>1745</td>
<td>85.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>502</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
<td>2704</td>
<td>2317</td>
<td>85.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>89.0%</td>
<td>3198</td>
<td>2773</td>
<td>86.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>844</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
<td>2675</td>
<td>2402</td>
<td>89.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>91.3%</td>
<td>1675</td>
<td>1476</td>
<td>88.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>90.8%</td>
<td>2179</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>83.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figure is perfectly clear. In what concerns the government the percentage between proposed and adopted amendments is very high. This means that the discrepancy between proposed and adopted amendments is not very high: most government amendments are accepted, and only a few withdrawn. This situation illustrates the preponderant position of the government in the course of the legislative process.

\(^{16}\) Government and committee members. Since our goal is to try to estimate deputies’ degree of freedom, we have chosen not to include reporters’ amendment proposals.
The distribution of committee proposals and adopted amendments is similar, even if fewer amendments are accepted. But the key point lies in the comparison between amendment proposals on the floor and amendment proposals in committees. Throughout the whole period, from 1967 to 2002, and more particularly since 1981, governments accept very few amendments on the floor. Conversely, a government’s level of acceptance in committees is higher, whether the proposals come from the majority or minority.

Figure 9 - Adopted amendment and amendment proposals in committees (by political party)

Deputy amendment requests have more chances of being allowed in committees than on the floor. This is not to say that there are no differences between majority and opposition, but opposition deputy members are much more likely to be satisfied in committees than during a debate on the floor. In fact, amendments presented in committees by deputies or by the government are not considered in the same way as on the floor. Political “attitude” is less important in committees because their work, which is really essential, is not “visible”. In this respect committee work may, in part, be considered as a form of technical work concerned with the law, even if the political dimension never disappears entirely. Deputy knowledge and professional behaviour prevails over traditional, often fruitless, confrontations.

But invisible politics still leaves some room for strategy. In the chart below we have divided the number of adopted amendments by the number of proposed amendments for the main political parties. The higher the ratio, the more a government tends to adopt the proposed amendments. We consider only the dominant party of the majority, the dominated party of the majority and the minority. This gives the following table for our study period.
**Table 6 – Majority and opposition parties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislature</th>
<th>Dominant party</th>
<th>Dominated party(ies)</th>
<th>Minority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>UDR</td>
<td>RI+PDM</td>
<td>FGDS+PC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>UDR</td>
<td>RI+PDM</td>
<td>FGDS+PC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>UDR</td>
<td>RI+RCDS</td>
<td>PSRG+PC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>RPR</td>
<td>UDF</td>
<td>PS+PC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>PS</td>
<td>PC</td>
<td>RPR+UDF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>RPR</td>
<td>UDF</td>
<td>PS + PC + FN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX</td>
<td>PS</td>
<td>PC&lt;sup&gt;17&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>RPR +UDF + UDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>RPR</td>
<td>UDF</td>
<td>PS + PC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI</td>
<td>PS</td>
<td>PC and Green (RCV)</td>
<td>RPR + UDF + DL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7 - Proportion of amendments accepted in committees**

We have chosen to illustrate the strategic behaviour of governments in our focus on our second sub-period, 1981-2002. The chart may, in part, be envisaged as an illustration of each government’s strategic behaviour.

For instance, even the political context of strong confrontation on the visible side of politics, from 1981 to 1986, cannot hide the fact that deputies from minority parties (RPR and UDF) had more amendments adopted than was the case for PS and PC deputies. But this trend was reversed at the end of the legislature, just before the elections.

During the first cohabitation period, with its weak majority, Jacques Chirac’s government tried to handle UDF deputies carefully, accepting more proposals from them than from the RPR, the dominant party of the coalition.

<sup>17</sup> We have indicated the PC as the dominated party of the majority because it remained the main ally of the Socialist party during this legislature.
This was even more noticeable during the following legislature. Because of its relative majority, left governments tended to satisfy more requests from the dominant Socialist party. The two other curves may reflect, on the one hand, defiance towards the Communist party and, on the other hand, the fact that the centre is sometimes incorporated into the majority.

Finally, the second cohabitation curves clearly indicate that political confrontation was less marked than on the floor: more PS deputy proposals were adopted than those of the Right.

Conclusion

It is not necessary to stress that this study has to be followed up by further investigations. Some of the indicators used are not sufficiently robust and must be complemented by other statistical procedures; but even the raw information given by the dataset is helpful for a better understanding of the French National Assembly and a better appreciation of the way it really works.

Our work clearly illustrates the point of view of Mattson (1995): even though the individual member’s role in the legislative process is in decline, and party dominance is the general pattern in Western Europe, there is still room for variation between parliaments regarding the individual right to initiate legislation and amendments. Our study shows clearly that the French National Assembly is a real part of the legislative process, even if deputies are far from being as powerful as governments.

The distinction between Left and Right parties in legislative work is also particularly interesting, since this point has never been sufficiently underlined in France.

Our study also shows that deputy activity has evolved over time, although this evolution is not compatible with what people think a parliament should do. As Dorey (2004) stresses in the case of the United Kingdom: “Yet whilst the Westminster Model continues to provide a normative framework concerning the role which many believe Parliament ought to play, the empirical reality discerned by most political commentators during the last one hundred years suggests something rather different”.

Indeed, the control over deputy activity reflects the fact that the effective initiation of laws is dominated by the executive. Nevertheless, deputies are trying to use as best they can all the possibilities they have available. The fact that most of the work is done in committees, leaving political drama for the floor, simply reflects the way in which modern parliaments are currently run (Le Divellec, 1994). The role of deputies is changing (Dorey,2004), and the use of legislative initiatives represents one of the tools of change: deputies want to criticise, to attract media attention, and to put forward an alternative government policy (Zahle,1987). Private Members’ bills or amendments constitute a new form of parliamentary activity, one which is complementary to other means of control and opinion-building measures such as parliamentary questions (not very efficient in France: Bourbao-Guizou,2004).

Finally, for a better comprehension of the situation, we plan to complete our analysis by a more qualitative approach, able to evaluate the exact nature of amendments: proposals, withdrawn, adopted. At the same time, a more minute analysis of private member bill proposals has to be made to determine the proportion of bills submitted either independently, by deputies, or by the government itself. This is why randomly selected laws of the period will be studied in detail.
## Annexe – Restrictive procedures in France

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanisms of government agenda setting</th>
<th>Rules*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time Constraints</strong>&lt;br&gt;Government proposals may have priority over parliamentary ones; in addition it may be possible for governments to restrict time for discussion to a level that hinders or prohibits the introduction of amendments</td>
<td>Art. 48.1: priority for government in legislative agenda&lt;br&gt;Art. 28.3: allows government to add <em>de jure</em> some days (also, art. 50).&lt;br&gt;Art. 48.3: since 04/08/1995, parliamentary reserved sessions (« <em>niches parlementaires</em> »)&lt;br&gt;Art. 45: Prime minister has the power to gather the conference committee&lt;br&gt;Art. 28: limit parliamentary meetings to 120 days (art. 28.3: Prime minister can add more days)&lt;br&gt;Art. 47: limit of 70 days to vote the budget (40 NA, 15 Sénat, 15 resolutions)&lt;br&gt;Art. 47.1: limit of 50 days to vote the Social Security budget (20 AN, 15 Sénat, 15 resolutions)&lt;br&gt;Art. 45: Prime Minister can proclaim a state of « urgency » for a law, limiting discussion to one session on the floor of each assembly before an inter-chamber committee.&lt;br&gt;Art. 100.7: advocacy of amendments limited to 5 mins (NA President is allowed to extend or limit this time), except for the government.&lt;br&gt;Art. 29.2: special parliamentary meetings called by a majority of MPs are limited to 12 days.&lt;br&gt;Art. 29: favours the Prime Minister calling for a special parliamentary meeting (length and delay).&lt;br&gt;Art. 101: The government is allowed to ask for a new discussion of a law, or a part of it, just before the final vote. Amendments rejected in this 2nd discussion confirm the 1st discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Closed or Restrictive Rule</strong>&lt;br&gt;No or few amendments to government proposals are accepted (for example, introduction of germaneness requirements, or restriction to amendments that increase spending or reduce revenues)</td>
<td>Art. 40: financial inadmissibility&lt;br&gt;Art. 41: legislative inadmissibility&lt;br&gt;Art. 98.5, Art. 127, Art. 111.13 Social Security Organic Law: Germaneness rule&lt;br&gt;Art. 44.3: package vote (<em>vote bloqué</em>)&lt;br&gt;Art. 49.3: confidence vote procedure&lt;br&gt;Art. 45: after a conference committee, the bill is voted on the floor of each assembly under closed rule, unless the government accepts amendments.</td>
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<td><strong>Expansive Rules</strong>&lt;br&gt;Permitting the government to make amendments that are prohibited to other parties</td>
<td>Art. 40: financial inadmissibility</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sequencing Rules</strong>&lt;br&gt;Permitting the government to make amendments at times when other amendments are not permitted</td>
<td>Art. 45: after a conference committee, the bill is voted on the floor of each assembly under closed rule, unless the government accepts amendments.</td>
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<td><strong>Voting Order Rules</strong>&lt;br&gt;The governmental bill (rather than the proposal from the committee) gains a privileged position in the order of voting</td>
<td>Art. 42: The government’s bill is the basis of discussion on the floor, not the committee’s proposition, but amendments are voted first.</td>
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<td><strong>Vote-Counting</strong>&lt;br&gt;Votes in favour of or against government proposals are counted differently than other proposals.</td>
<td>Art. 49.2: during confidence vote procedure, when the opposition wants to reverse the government (<em>motion de censure</em>), only votes against the government are counted and a majority of elected MPs is necessary to win. Only a majority of valid votes is usually necessary otherwise.</td>
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<td><strong>Gatekeeping Rules</strong>&lt;br&gt;It is possible for the government to hold an issue away from</td>
<td>Art. 49.3: confidence vote procedure: no vote occurs on the law.&lt;br&gt;Art. 41: legislative inadmissibility.</td>
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consideration by the parliament

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exclusive Government Jurisdiction: Executive decrees can be offered to the government by the constitution, a general act of Parliament, or by specific Parliamentary votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

*: Articles from the constitution come in blue and normal font. Articles from NAR (National Assembly Regulation) come in orange.

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