

## **Parliaments and their relationship with Governments**

Course: Vergleichende Politikwissenschaft  
Professor: Antje Kirchner  
Relator: Martina Stelzig

### **1. Parliaments and their characteristics:**

#### **1.1 Unicameralism and Bicameralism**

#### **1.2 Bicameralism:**

- a. Symmetrical bicameral legislature
- b. Asymmetrical bicameral legislature
- c. Incongruent chambers

#### **1.3 Different forms of bicameralism:**

- a. Strong bicameralism
- b. Medium-strength bicameralism
- c. Weak bicameralism

#### **1.4 Definition of parliamentary system**

### **2. Structural characteristics of Landtage:**

- a. Unicameral
- b. Number of constituencies and the period of legislature are approximately the same in every Land
- c. Strongest worker group represented: public workers
- d. Strongest age group represented: 40-59
- e. Average percentage of women in parliament: 28,6%

### **3. Main aspects of the relationship executive-legislative:**

- a. King: relationship between parties and internal party relationships
- b. Norton:
  - External variables
  - Internal variables
- c. Lijphart: stability of Government (index of executive dominance)
- d. Döring: timing
- e. Siaroff: executive dominance is often accompanied with political centralisation
- f. Schnapp and Harfst: negative connection between strength of government and parliament and its resources equipment

### **4. Executive dominance in Germany:**

#### **4.1 Electoral function:**

- a. The parliament has influence on forming and dismissing the government

#### **4.2** Lawmaking function:

- a. Influence of the executive on parliamentary agenda
- b. Right of initiative of MPs

#### **4.3** Function of control:

- a. Inquiries and debates on governmental work
- b. Right of summoning
- c. Minorities can request a procedure of normal control
- d. Governmental right of reporting on parliament

#### **5. Determinants of party system on Government:**

- a. Fragmentation, electoral volatility and strong polarisation influence negatively on the stability of a cabinet

#### **6. Defining control:**

- a. Control as surveillance
- b. Control through accountability
- c. Control as guidance

#### **6.1** Defining the actions of controlling:

- a. Sanctions
- b. Reclamation of information

#### **7. Parliamentary means of control:**

##### **7.1** Structures of control:

- a. Committees:
  - Size and number
  - Specularity of business between committees and ministries
  - Specialization of MPs

##### **7.2** Resources of control:

- a. The number of MPs
- b. Size of parliamentary staff and personal assistance of committees
- c. Libraries and scientific operators

##### **7.3** Rights of information and control:

- a. Rights of information:
  - Right to report
  - Right of the majority to designate the chairmen of committees
- b. Rights of control:
  - Control over budgeting time
  - Extra parliamentary rights of control: invoice scrutiny and ombudsmen

**Schnapp and Harfst:  
Legislative control and capacity of information in comparison**

<b>Land</b>	<b>Structures of control</b>	<b>Resources of control</b>	<b>Right of control</b>
Austria	5,2	16,0	7,1
Australia	13,3	8,1	12,9
Belgium	8,3	11,6	12,1
Canada	12,3	6,5	14,4
Denmark	3,3	14,2	8,0
Finland	7,8	9,8	12,1
France	13,9	7,2	16,1
Germany	5,9	5,3	10,9
Greece	12,5	9,7	12,5
Great Britain	13,6	8,4	9,5
Ireland	11,3	15,2	10,4
Italy	10,9	6,4	10,3
Japan	8,5	3,5	11,5
Luxembourg	10,3	18,4	-
Netherlands	8,6	15,4	10,4
New Zealand	9,4	12,4	11,1
Norway	8,8	14,3	11,5
Portugal	6,5	14,3	11,5
Spain	5,9	11,1	7,0
Sweden	8,5	8,3	11,5
Switzerland	6,8	15,0	14,3
Usa	7,1	2,4	6,4

1

**Bibliography:**

*Flick, Martina*, 2008: Parlamente und ihre Beziehungen zu den Regierungen, in *Markus Freitag und Adrian Vatter (Hrsg.): Die Demokratien der deutschen Bundesländer*. Opladen: UTB, 161-194.

*Lijphart, Arend*, 1999: Patterns of democracy, Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries. New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 200-215.

*Schnapp, Kai-Uwe und Philippe Harfst*, 2005: Parlamentarische Informations- und Kontrollressourcen in 22 westlichen Demokratien, *Zeitschrift für Parlamentsfragen*, 36: 348-370.

---

<sup>1</sup> The ranking has a theoretical value, that goes between 1 and 21, where 1 represents the maximal possibility of parliamentary control and 21 the minimal.