

**British Representative Institutions and the
Management of Crises: Conceptual and Empirical
Connections**

A thesis submitted by

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Abstract

The thesis develops an analytical framework, constituted by a combination of political science, parliamentary and crisis management literatures, for the study of representative functions during crises. The framework is then applied to four case studies of contemporary crises (the 2000 fuel protests; the 2001 Foot and Mouth epidemic; and, the Scottish and English exam crises of 2000 and 2002) and operationalised through interviews with civil servants and elected representatives in Cardiff, Edinburgh and Westminster. Findings are presented about the relationship between representative functions and the management of crises at the macro-level (representative systems), meso-level (representative institutions) and micro-level (individual representatives), which indicate that representation, at all levels, is relevant to the management of crises in a number of ways. In particular, the thesis concludes that representative institutions and individuals are important to the symbolic politics, 'legitimacy dynamics' and operational dimensions of crisis management.

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List of Abbreviations

AM	Assembly Member (Wales)
AQA	Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (England)
ARDC	Agriculture and Rural Development Committee (Welsh Assembly)
CCC	Civil Contingencies Committee
CCS	Civil Contingencies Secretariat
COBR	Cabinet Office Briefing Room
CVO	Chief Veterinary Officer
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DETR	Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (UK)
ECSC	Education, Culture and Sport Committee (Scottish Parliament)
ELLC	Enterprise and Life Long Learning Committee (Scottish Parliament)
FMD	Foot and Mouth Disease
FVO	Food and Veterinary Office (European Union)
GEM	Grade Evaluation Meeting
JCC	Joint Co-ordination Centre
LDCC	Local Disease Control Centre
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food
MP	Member of Parliament (UK)
MSP	Member of the Scottish Parliament
NDPB	Non-Departmental Public Body
NFU	National Farmers Union
OCR	Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examination Board
OPEC	Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (England)
ROD	Regional Operations Director
SECD	Scottish Executive Civil Contingencies Division
SEED	Scottish Executive Education Department
SEELLD	Scottish Executive Enterprise and Life Long Learning Department
SEERAD	Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department
SNP	Scottish National Party
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SVS	State Veterinary Service
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government

Introduction

Between 2000 and 2002 a series of domestic crises engulfed the executives of the United Kingdom, Scotland and Wales. In this period, executives had to respond to the internal challenges posed by fuel protests, the Foot and Mouth epidemic and exam crises. These crises exposed the inadequacy of the UK's crisis management machinery and provided a timely reminder that crisis *mis*management could have significant political consequences. While most of the immediate attention of the press and commentators was focused upon the performance of governments and their respective departments and agencies, there were other institutions and actors involved in the management of these crises. The purpose of this thesis, therefore, is to examine the role played by representative institutions - the parliaments and assemblies in Britain - in these crises. In one sense these are largely 'forgotten' institutions in the consideration of crisis management. This finds reflection in the simple fact that they are largely overlooked in modern 'crisis management' analyses, which tend to focus upon executive actions (Rosenthal *et al.* 1991; 'tHart 1994; Rosenthal and Kouzmin 1997; Albaek 2001; Dror 2001; Boin and 'tHart 2003). Yet it is the contention of this thesis that other political institutions, especially representative assemblies, are of some importance in the resolution of crises. The aim of this thesis, therefore, is to begin to redress this imbalance by examining both the conceptual grounds upon which representative institutions should be factored into the analysis of crisis management, and the practical involvement of British representative assemblies to the management of contemporary crises.

Two Fields of Study: One Research Question

Crisis management academics have called for analytical lenses that can provide insights into the politics that are played out during crisis episodes. Conversely, in the field of legislative studies, it has been shown that significant advances in knowledge can be achieved when

representative functions are examined in novel contexts. A single inquiry examining the involvement of representative assemblies during crisis periods can, therefore, make contributions to both fields of study simultaneously.

There is now a significant body of academic writing that provides differing perspectives on public and private sector crisis management. The majority of that literature, however, is characterised by a strong orientation towards managerial and organisational studies, which tend to be rational, positivistic and designed for the practitioners of crisis management. The predominance of these studies has meant that academics with an interest in exploring state responses to crisis have been predisposed towards engaging in analyses of executive decision making and bureaucratic implementation. Recent studies of the changing nature of crises and contingencies, however, have begun to show that government crisis responses are becoming more political and polycentric in terms of the numbers and 'mix' of actors involved (Quarantelli 1998: 274; Albaek 2001: 466; 'tHart *et al.* 2001: 181-182; McConnell and Stark 2002: 664; Boin *et al.* 2005: 47). Thus contemporary crisis management scholars counsel that 'it is crucial to understand that managing any crisis is not simply a technical matter of finding the optimal scientifically-based 'solution' and implementing it. It is also about politics' (McConnell and Stark 2002: 664) and that 'the importance of top-level policy makers in crisis response operations is easily overstated. ... In most crises, the key tenets of crisis responses are shaped by many more players within the government system' (Boin *et al.* 2005: 47).

The increasing diversity and politicisation of crisis management has a number of implications. First, broader conceptualisations of what crisis management is and who is involved warrant investigations into non-executive, non-operational institutions that may be germane to the 'bigger picture' of crisis management. Second, crisis management can no

longer remain a purely 'managerial' concern within academia - new perspectives are required because crisis scholarship today, more so than ever before, 'implies shooting at a moving target ... [as] the borderlines between the familiar territory of crisis analysis and the vast expanses of mainstream political, administrative and organisational theory begin to blur' ('tHart *et al.* 2001: 185). Third, as politics increasingly becomes a feature of crisis management and vice versa, certain crisis scholars have begun to advocate the use of specific political science perspectives. Arguments have been made that crisis researchers must become:

More acutely aware of the multiple parties, values and stakes that are at play ... they should critically examine the institutional make-up as well as the various calculi that public actors bring to a crisis ... They should become more versed in viewing issues of crisis management through the lenses of issue and policy networks, advocacy coalitions, bureaucratic politics, and intergovernmental bargaining. This is not to say that there is no longer any room for relatively neutral technocratic knowledge ... What it says is that we cannot afford to leave it at that. ('tHart *et al.* 2001: 185)

The absence of representative institutions from this research agenda is noticeable but not entirely unexpected. Political science lenses of the kind called for above have emerged over recent decades, alongside the concept of 'governance', to present a picture of the contemporary British political landscape as 'post-parliamentary'. The increasing use of these perspectives by political science academics, and the preference they are given in 'tHart *et al.*'s agenda, suggests that while politics may be crucial to an understanding of contemporary crisis management, representative institutions may not be essential to an understanding of contemporary politics. Doubts about the relevance of representative assemblies to contemporary politics, however, can be dispelled from the outset by outlining the crucial role that they play within the British state, and, subsequently, in the normative and empirical dimensions of political science. As David Judge notes, discussions of representation and liberal democracy are inextricably linked and, as a matter of course, representative analyses 'immediately become immersed in the exceedingly deep and

conceptual waters of 'democracy'. In fact we cannot avoid becoming embroiled in these waters, as one variant of democracy has at its very core - as one of its 'indispensable components' - the notion of representation and a representative assembly' (Judge 1999: 2).

The normative dimensions of representation cannot be ignored if crisis management scholars wish to understand the organising principles of liberal democratic politics - the 'rules of the game' - which are essential to understanding contemporary political structure and agency. One reason for this is that the normative elements of representative theory provide a benchmark, or touchstone, against which the realities of bureaucratic practice and political behaviour can be understood and measured (Judge 1993: 138-140). A second reason is that the principles of representation that imbue 'the rules of the game' also form, 'an essential term in the language of legitimation used by decision makers to establish their credentials to act on behalf of those not actually present at the point of decision, and also to assert their responsibility and accountability for decisions taken' (Judge 1999: 19). Representative theory, therefore, is not only crucial to understanding the normative characteristics of liberal democracy in this country, it is also central to empirically grounded analyses of political practice.

It is the legitimation function that is returned to repeatedly by parliamentary scholars who emphasise the importance of the representative assembly to contemporary politics (Packenham 1990: 86; Beetham 1992: 41; Judge 1993: 2; Flinders 2002a: 38). David Beetham, for example, identifies Westminster, 'as the most important device for reconciling the requirements of popular control and political equality with the exigencies of time and the conditions of the modern territorial state' (Beetham 1992: 41). Crisis management scholars interested in politics must acknowledge this importance because the major problem for the alternative 'post-parliamentary' perspectives noted above remains; they have failed to

forward alternatives to the essential legitimation generated through a representative system. Without such alternatives, political life in this country cannot be labelled 'post-parliamentary' and the importance of the representative assembly to politics cannot be understated; it will remain an indispensable feature at the heart of the British political landscape. As such, it must also be considered relevant to analyses of crisis management. Because the legitimation function places the representative assembly at the centre of each level of government in the United Kingdom, each assembly is ideally placed to become involved in, and provide insights into, the politics of a crisis response.

To some extent, parliamentary scholars can be blamed for the ascendancy of 'post-parliamentary' perspectives in political science. Unlike crisis management, the field of legislative studies has a long and rich history but it was a field once characterised by the scholastic acceptance of what Norton describes as 'axioms' and 'dictums' (Norton 1990: 4-5). The most persistent of these were that legislatures were primarily law *making* bodies and that they were in decline because of an inability to perform this function. In the second half of the twentieth-century, however, significant advances in legislative studies were made because parliamentary scholars began to look beyond the legislative function as a unit of analysis. Innovative examinations of legislatures in new contexts, such as Pakenham's study of the Brazilian Congress, (re)discovered parliamentary functions, advanced the frontiers of legislative study and challenged conventional wisdom about the declining importance of parliaments (Norton 1990: 11; Judge and Earnshaw 2003: 10; Leston-Bandeira 2004: 7). What these studies showed was that new perspectives about legislatures could be developed by examining familiar representative institutions in unfamiliar contexts.

Thus in one emerging academic field, researchers seeking to understand contemporary (crisis) contexts call for the use of analytical lenses which can provide insights into politics

while in another well-established but seemingly unrelated field of political science, novel contexts are being sought for the re-evaluation of traditional representative functions. The aim of this thesis is to make a contribution to both these research agendas simultaneously through one inquiry, which seeks to determine in what ways, if any, British representative assemblies are involved in and contribute to the management of contemporary crises. To this end, UK, Scottish and Welsh representative institutions are examined in relation to four case studies of domestic crises (the 2000 fuel protests; the 2001 Foot and Mouth epidemic; and, the Scottish (2000) and English (2002) exam crises). As units of analysis, the representative institutions are examined in a collective sense - in terms of the norms and values that they reflect from the wider political system (legitimacy, authorisation, accountability) and also in an institutional and individual sense - in terms of the roles and interactions of specific representatives within their institutions and constituencies (see below). Throughout the thesis the terms assembly, institution, parliament and legislature are used interchangeably as shorthand descriptions of the UK and Scottish parliaments and the Welsh Assembly. Clearly, there are a number of differences between each body; differences which could be used to argue that such labels do not apply uniformly across all three. While it is possible to recognise the validity of such arguments, the relevancy of introducing such a definitional debate within this thesis is questionable because the focus of this inquiry is specific representative functions, germane to all three institutions, which will be defined in detail.

Underpinning the thesis is a claim that, if linked together properly, perspectives from one discipline can be used as an analytical prism to examine key features and characteristics of the other and that novel insights may be refracted for the benefit of both fields. On one hand, the centrality of the representative assembly to political life, and the multidimensional nature of parliamentary roles, provides an *a priori* indication that they can be used to gain

insights into a range of political phenomena, which should be of relevance to crisis management. On the other hand, parliamentary scholars should also benefit from the examination of representative institutions in a crisis context, which is by its very nature, abnormal. Such environments should provide an interesting twenty-first century setting for the re-evaluation of 'taken for granted' representative institutions. Some parliamentary processes, which may be considered arcane or ritualistic during periods of normalcy, such as deliberation, for example, may prove to be especially important in a crisis context while other functions, which are traditionally regarded as significant, such as the legislative function, may not be particularly relevant to the management of crises.

Connections between Crisis and Parliamentary Perspectives

A cursory review of parliamentary and crisis research could easily lead to a conclusion that scholars from each field have little in common. In fact, more careful analysis of the research outputs from the two fields reveals that they are not as different as some might think. Existing research pertaining to contemporary crises makes occasional reference to legislatures, and reveals, for example, that parliamentary scrutiny is relevant to post-crisis lesson learning and politics ('tHart and Boin 2001: 37; Brandstorm and Kuipers 2003: 293; Boin *et al.* 2005: 108; Resodihardjo 2005: 199). However, because representative institutions have never been the main focus of analytical endeavour, little is known about their involvement in crisis management processes beyond incidental statements which allude to a potential importance. The fact that representative assemblies are already referred to within certain crisis studies, yet have not been subjected to analysis in their own right, suggests that new research avenues for crisis management and parliamentary scholars may well be opened up by connecting these fields together.

Despite the fact that certain crisis and parliamentary scholars share the same research

interests each field has developed in isolation from the other. Many parliamentary scholars and some crisis management researchers share an interest in legitimacy, authority, accountability, regime stability, symbolic political communication and structure-agency interaction. The existence of these commonalities suggests that crisis and legislative studies are not worlds apart; they can be connected. The legitimacy of government, for example, is a central concern of parliamentary and crisis management scholars. As already noted above, arguments about the importance of representative institutions in a modern polity often return to the simple, yet irrefutable, claim that such institutions are essential because of the legitimation they provide for government actions (Packenham 1990: 86; Beetham 1992: 41; Judge 1993: 2; Flinders 2002a: 38). On the other side of the analytical 'divide', contemporary crisis scholars have begun to use legitimacy as a referent within their crisis definitions and as an analytical tool to explore the escalation of certain crises and the effectiveness of government decision making (Boin and 'tHart 2000: 11; Boin 2004: 167; Hansen and Stern 2001: 179). Ultimately, these approaches suggest that modern crises are 'dynamic forces in ongoing processes of legitimization, delegitimization, and re-legitimization of the social order, in particular the prevailing patterns of political and administrative authority' ('tHart and Boin 2001: 31) and that 'the currency of crisis is legitimacy' (Boin 2004: 167). Thus, legitimacy is an excellent example of one powerful bridging concept, which can be used to make connections between analyses of crisis management and parliamentary processes.

Analytical Framework and Research Outputs

The various points at which crisis management and parliamentary literatures intersect provide the foundations for an analytical framework which is designed to structure the empirical elements of the thesis. The framework is comprised of a series of proposals, which hypothesise the ways in which British representative assemblies might contribute to

the management of contemporary crises. Proposals are made about the relevance of seven representative functions, which allows the relationship between representative assemblies and crisis management to be explored across three interconnected analytical levels.

At the macro-level, representative *systems* are examined in relation to: regime legitimacy and stability; the interface between parliamentary systems and crisis management agency; and, the inter-institutional dimensions of crisis management at the devolved and UK system levels. The outputs from this level of analysis should integrate and enhance a range of political science and crisis management perspectives, relating to the relationship between legitimacy, 'diffuse support' and state resilience (Hermann 1972; Wildavsky 1988; Easton 1965; Loewenberg 1971; Beetham 1991); the tacit influence of patterns of governance over political and bureaucratic behaviour ('tHart 1994; Stern 1997; Rhodes 2000; Marsh *et al.* 2001; Judge 2004); the interaction between regime legitimacy and the effectiveness of specific crisis management authorities (Easton 1965; Beetham 1991; de Vroom 2001; Hansen and Stern 2001; Boin and 'tHart 2003); and, the demands of managing crises in a multi-level governance context (Bovens *et al.* 2001; Albaek 2001; Richards and Smith 2002; Bevir and Rhodes 2003).

At the meso-level, representative *institutions* are examined in relation to hypotheses about more traditional parliamentary functions which tend to be performed by collectivities of elected members. In this regard, each assembly's deliberative, cathartic and executive-scrutiny roles are explored, as is their ability to influence contingent policymaking and symbolic forms of crisis communication. Again, the findings which emerge make a contribution to a number of academic perspectives relating to parliamentary influence over policymaking (Wahlke 1971; Mezey 1979; Norton 1984; Pakenham 1990) and the policy 'networks' versus 'communities' debate in particular (Richardson and Jordan 1979; Norton

Rhodes and Marsh 1992; Judge 1993; Rhodes 2000); deliberative theory, parliamentary deliberation and crisis conflict (Jewell and Patterson 1973; Loewenberg and Patterson 1979; Dryzek 1990; Rosenthal *et al.* 1991; Elster 1998; Miller 2003; Boin *et al.* 2005); symbolic forms of political communication (Jackson 1976; Edelman 1977; 'tHart 1993; Eriksson 2001; Brandstorm and Kuipers 2003); the effects of cathartic functions over crisis causation, policy acquiescence and crisis 'termination' (Smith 1938; Jewell and Patterson 1973; Pakenham 1990; Boin *et al.* 2005); and, the dynamics of parliamentary accountability and post-crisis learning, politics and policy change (Argyris and Schon 1978; Kingdon 1984; Keeler 1993; Stern 1997; Brandstorm and Kuipers 2003; Boin *et al.* 2005).

At the micro-level, *individual representatives* are examined in relation to crisis responses through a series of proposals about the importance of constituency roles during crises. Findings in this area pertain directly to a number of academic debates about territorial representation and political and policy orientated communication (Beer 1966; Grumm 1972; Bulpitt 1983; Wood 1991; Norton and Wood 1993; Boin *et al.* 2005).

Operationalising the Analytical Framework

The analytical framework is applied to the four case studies of: i) the 2000 fuel protests; ii) the 2000 Scottish exam crises; iii) the 2001 Foot and Mouth epidemic; iv) the 2002 English exam crisis. The decision to use a case study approach can be justified in a number of ways. The strongest justification emerges from one of the few themes which unite case study literatures, which is the claim that cases are particularly effective when exploratory 'what', 'where' and 'how' questions are being asked (Robson 1993: 149; Gerring 2004: 347; Yin 2004: 3-4; Punch 2005: 147-148). For this kind of research, the majority of texts on research methods suggests that the case study approach is at its strongest or is in fact essential. Thus exploratory works that engage in 'discovering important features, developing an

understanding of them, conceptualising for further study are often best achieved through the case study strategy' (Punch 2005: 147-148). A second justification for a case study approach relates to the flexibility that it offers a project. This flexibility is clearly advantageous to this thesis because it is focusing on a novel research area. A robust framework is required to guide the research but a rigid design, such as that used in survey methodology, might prove to be counterproductive given the lack of pre-existing research connecting representative institutions to crisis management. It is vital that the analytical scope can move beyond the areas set out in the framework if required. A research design which maintains a very tight focus could prevent the discovery of unforeseen areas, which could not have been extrapolated from reviews of the literature. The case study approach therefore allows a balance to be struck between a rigid structure, which is effective for confirmatory (hypothesis testing) research and a flexible structure which can help establish all the contours of a phenomena in the first instance (Robson 1993: 148). In this rationale, it is the "fuzziness" of the case study, the criticism that is most often attached to this approach, which is attractive because it allows exploratory, confirmatory and even explanatory objectives to evolve in a design and be pursued simultaneously. Indeed, many contemporary researchers, despite agreeing that exploratory research is the case study's strongest suit, agree that case studies are also useful for explanatory purposes and the examination of correlative, causal and proximate relationships (Roberts 1996: 66; Yin 2004: 4 Gerring 2004: 348; George and Bennett 2004: 10).

The specific case selections can also be justified. First, the cases are representative in the sense that they all correspond to one particular definition of contemporary crises, discussed in more detail in chapter one, which conceptualises the modern crisis episode as a threat to values, which necessitates urgent decision making and creates a sense of uncertainty (Rosenthal and Kouzmin 1997: 279; Rosenthal 1998: 227; Boin 2004: 167). Second, the

choice of cases means that the project is historically bounded and that crisis management processes (and any parliamentary involvement) are comparable. The specific selections have been chosen because all the crises occurred within one discrete time period (2000-2002) and within a specific crisis management policy framework. After 2003, the executives of each nation began to reform their crisis management machinery in response to the Civil Contingencies Act (2004). A design which chose cases before and after 2004 would suffer because one half of the crisis management-parliamentary relationship would be distorted across time. Third, while the research design is bounded and representative of larger phenomena, the case studies are different. Together, they are capable of providing insights into the inter-governmental linkages required to respond to UK-wide crises as well as inter-institutional issues within each country. The cases also span a range of different policy types with different network characteristics; a variety of crisis responses in terms of the mix of politics and operations; and, they all provoked very different 'post-crisis' reforms. Most importantly, the threat level attached to each crisis encouraged a different kind of political atmosphere in each case. The Foot and Mouth epidemic was widely viewed as a very serious crisis, which had significant environmental and economic consequences. As such, it was widely believed that the disease should be met with a united response. In the initial stages of the epidemic, therefore, partisan politics was 'put to one side' as all parties agreed that disease control was the priority. Political conflicts emerged, however, as serious deficiencies in the crisis response emerged. The fuel crisis was different for two reasons. First, the threat of petrol shortages was not immediately felt or immediately apparent. Second, from the outset the crisis was based upon political conflict between the protestors and the UK Executive. Indeed, the political rhetoric between the main protagonists often revolved around whether or not the protests were a threat to UK citizens. The exam crises were different again because the nature of the threat was even lower and, therefore, more scope existed for partisan politics. To a large extent, these two crises can be seen as political

artefacts because policy failures in each assessment system were exacerbated by the actions of political actors. Thus each of the four crises could be positioned at various points on two scales, measuring threat and the nature of crisis politics. This 'most different' type of design (Landman 2003: 27), means that any findings which are replicated across the cases will be valid and generalisable, which in turn means that stronger inferences can be made about the role of representative institutions in crisis episodes (Landman 2003: 27-29; Yin 2004: 46).

The case study approach allows for the use of a range of data collection methods (Robson 1993: 89; Stake 2000: 435; Yin 2004: 14). Semi-structured elite interviews are used in this thesis. Thirty nine interviews were conducted with civil servants and elected representatives from the UK, Scottish and Welsh parliaments and assemblies. The full list of interviewees and the rationale for contacting each respondent is provided in Appendix A (civil servants who wished to remain anonymous have not been named). Semi-structured interviews are cited by methods scholars as the most appropriate format when dealing with elite respondents (Fielding and Thomas 2001: 124; Odlendahl and Shaw 2002 299; Rossman and Rallis 2003: 192). Such individuals require an active and stimulating form of interaction with the researcher and a style of discussion which takes into consideration their experience and predilections (Rossman and Rallis 2003: 192). Elite respondents can quickly become frustrated by an interview format that is rigid, formulaic and characterised by 'closed' questions which allow little opportunity for expression (Fielding and Thomas 2001: 124). Thus, elites 'respond well to inquiries about broad topics and to intelligent, provocative, open-ended questions that allow them the freedom to use their knowledge and imagination' (Rossman and Rallis 2003: 192). Flexibility is another desirable consequence of the semi-structured approach to interviewing. Strict categorisations which ask precise questions may be more effective at establishing comparability but they limit the field of inquiry and prioritise standardisation above deeper meaning and context (Fontana and Frey 2000: 649;

Punch 2005: 146). Semi-structured interviews provide the freedom to 'wander outside' the analytical framework as the research gathers momentum and new data and ideas emerge during the interview process. This is especially important because the purpose of this research is not to obtain standardised responses between individuals but to have interviewees 'open up'; to probe and elucidate their own perceptions and to discuss areas which are not always related to the research hypotheses, so that the most important contours of the parliament-crisis management relationship can be explored. In this sense, reliability and comparability are being traded off, to a small extent, with the need for flexibility, context and qualitative depth and breadth. The semi-structured interview, therefore, can offer the best of both worlds when used correctly; enough structure to ensure that comparability is guaranteed between subject matter (i.e. all the hypotheses within the framework are discussed in some sense), yet enough flexibility to guarantee that important new areas will not be excluded for the sake of (artificial) methodological neatness.

Thesis Structure and Contents

Chapter one provides a broad review of crisis management literature. An examination of the dominant perspectives within that field allows general connections to be made between political science and crisis management. Chapter two begins to make connections in finer detail by linking themes based around crisis management 'stages' to the study of representative institutions. Thus, pre-crisis, acute-stage and post-crisis research are all used to develop hypotheses about potential parliamentary involvement in the crisis management cycle. Chapter three builds on the themes of chapters one and two by reviewing academic studies of parliamentary literatures and connecting specific representative functions back to the issues outlined previously. The chapter concludes with the presentation of the research framework, which guides the case study inquiries. Chapter four sets out the narrative of each case study so that the findings which follow are enriched by the context of each crisis

episode.

The findings themselves are organised into three chapters, each one focusing on the micro, meso and macro levels of analysis which constitute the analytical framework. The need to maintain a focus on parliamentary functions and present the findings in a clear and intelligible manner justifies this structure. The thesis requires a research design which manages four crises, three assemblies and a series of hypotheses. Moreover, each area of the analytical framework has its own unique theoretical underpinning and specific hypotheses. With so many design components, the thesis's analytical focus and presentational clarity could be compromised without a structure that is parsimonious and precise. Structuring the findings around separate functions ensures that parliamentary involvement is the primary focus throughout the thesis and does not become 'lost' or diluted during the research or writing process. The three different levels of analysis that structure the findings sections - macro (systems), meso (institutions) and micro (individuals) - are not an artificial construct; they are not culled from any one specific piece of literature and superimposed here. Instead this structure is merely a 'natural' consequence of the fact that the functions that appear to be most relevant to crises exist across these three levels.

Obviously, the findings might have been organised around the individual assemblies or by each case study but both of these designs present problems. If the data was structured around the three assemblies separately, it would be difficult to compare and contrast each institution's involvement in the cases. Moreover, analysing each institution in its own right might preclude findings about the inter-institutional challenges of managing UK-wide crises. Presentational weaknesses would compound these analytical problems. In order to review each function completely, the theoretical underpinning and specific hypotheses relating to it would have to be returned to and outlined on three separate occasions causing unnecessary

duplication. The findings pertaining to that function would also lose a degree of meaning because they could not be analysed as a cumulative whole - they would, instead, be separated across chapters. Structuring the findings across the case studies would also result in the reiteration of the functions on four separate occasions, which would again limit the impact of the findings as a whole and lead to unnecessary duplication. This kind of format would also place limitations on inter-case comparison. The characteristics of each crisis are likely to be a factor that affects the degree and nature of assembly involvement. One might expect, for example, more parliamentary involvement in crises with long post-event investigations. Structuring the findings into separate case chapters could mean that shared crisis characteristics, which exist across the studies and affect assembly involvement, may not be transparent. Ultimately, therefore, the present structure provides the means to focus clearly and consistently on the areas set out in the analytical framework. Chapter five examines micro level constituency roles performed by individual representatives. Chapter six examines a range of more 'traditional' functions performed institutionally within the assemblies. These include parliamentary deliberation; cathartic functions; scrutiny functions; symbolic forms of political communication; and, parliamentary influence over contingently made crisis policy. Finally, chapter seven analyses macro-level functions relating to parliamentary systems, including structure-agency effects and the role of 'regime' legitimacy and support.

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the ways in which representative assemblies contribute to the management of contemporary crises. Over the next three chapters an analytical framework, constituted by a combination of political science, parliamentary and crisis management literatures, is developed for the study of representative functions during crises. The hypotheses that constitute the analytical framework are of interest to

parliamentary and crisis management scholars alike as they point to the common themes that connect their respective fields. In this sense, the creation of the framework can be seen as a worthwhile output in itself. When the connections between crisis management and representative institutions become apparent, new research avenues may well open up for the benefit of parliamentary and crisis management researchers. Chapter one begins this exercise by introducing the definitions, disciplines and research themes found under the label 'crisis management' and linking these perspectives to larger themes which are explored throughout the thesis.

In later chapters and sections of the thesis, the application of the framework to four contemporary crisis case studies generates novel findings about the interface between crisis management policy and politics and about the relevance of parliamentary functionalism in the twenty-first century. The relationship between seven representative functions and the management of crises is explored at the macro-level (representative systems), meso-level (representative institutions) and micro-level (individual representatives). Parliamentary involvement across these analytical levels varies considerably across the cases, assemblies and functions. Indeed, the empirical substance of the thesis presents a nuanced and variable picture of parliamentary involvement in this emerging policy area. However, representative institutions and representative roles appear to be particularly important to symbolic politics, 'legitimacy dynamics' and, somewhat more surprisingly, the operational dimensions of crisis management.

Chapter One

Putting Crisis Management on the Map: Definitions, Perspectives and Research Themes

Introduction

The first three chapters of this thesis are designed to present an analytical framework which addresses the core research question of the thesis: in what ways, if any, do British representative institutions contribute to the management of contemporary crises?

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, it provides a brief introduction to the definitions, disciplines and research themes found under the label 'crisis management'. This is achieved by outlining the historical development of crisis management knowledge and summarising its nature today. Drawing a 'map' of crisis management research represents the first step in connecting the respective literatures on crisis and parliaments, which is the second objective of the chapter. Parliamentary and crisis management perspectives are connected below through a series of specific hypotheses about parliamentary involvement in symbolic crisis politics. These hypotheses form one element of the thesis's analytical framework. The chapter also concludes by highlighting several broad connections between the perspectives noted below and the study of representative systems and assemblies. These connections are then developed further in subsequent chapters.

Modern crisis literature is the product of an evolution of crisis experiences, which have shaped the definitions and research agendas of academics. To understand the nature of contemporary crisis research, and to build an analytical framework from its multi-faceted parts, requires knowledge of the dominant schools of thought that have influenced its evolution and, subsequently, its form today. The first part of this review therefore presents an outline of the ways in which crises have been defined and researched by writers in various

disciplines. Definitions of crises in particular are fundamental to an understanding of the development of the literature because the scope and content of each branch of crisis research has been shaped considerably by the unique, discipline specific, definitions of crisis commentators. The highly specific nature of most crisis-related research means that the different research perspectives that now constitute contemporary crisis knowledge developed disjointedly throughout the majority of the twentieth-century (Quarantelli 1998). It was not until the 1990s that these separate strands began to be integrated by researchers who were prepared to use more holistic definitions of crisis and crisis management (for example, Rosenthal 1998; Boin 2004). To understand crisis management research today, reference must be made to the historical development of each individual part that makes up the whole.

The different definitions of crisis and, therefore, the majority of crisis related research, can be grouped into six dominant paradigms. These are, firstly, *the international relations and 'patterns of war approach'* (Gilbert 1998), which strongly reflects the cold war context in which it first emerged. Researchers working within this paradigm were particularly focused on producing decision making theorems based around the concept of crises as threats from external agents (Young 1967; Rosenau 1969; Hermann 1972; George 1991; Brecher 1993; Allison and Zelikow 1999). Second, *disaster research* is dichotomised between those who study and those who practice crisis management. The complex array of *sociological disaster studies* represents one half of the disaster research dichotomy. These researchers offer a comprehensive but bewildering array of definitions (Carr 1932; Fritz 1971; Barton 1989; Quarantelli 1998). Third, on the other side of the dichotomy, *rational 'hazards' perspectives* are orientated toward the crisis practitioner in the action setting. These approaches tend to be instrumental in nature and remain popular amongst public and private sector practitioners (Nudell and Anthokol 1988; Regester 1989; Hills 1994; Keller and Al-madhari 1996, UNEP-APPELL 2002; Cabinet Office 2003a). Fourth, 'soft core' *corporate and organisational*

studies conceptualise crises around the notion of organisational survival. These efforts, as with organisational theory generally, have a strong generic appeal to students of all crisis types (Dyson and Wilkes 1983; Fink 1986; Lerbringer 1986; Mitroff 1988; Mitroff and Pearson 1993). Fifth, *economic-structural approaches* define crises as symptoms of deep-seated contradictions in the structures of state and society. These approaches are important because they provide a connection between state and crisis that will be familiar to students of Marxism. Finally, research endeavours that can be categorised under the label of '*modern crisis management*' (Boin 2004) will be elucidated. As a product of the epistemological heritage mentioned above, research categorised under this heading reflects the diversity of its components. Studies that have a policy, public administration and political flavour, however, tend to dominate modern crisis management and it is these, because of their utility to this thesis, that will be focused on below (Jackson 1976; 'tHart 1993; Rosenthal *et al.* 2001; Eriksson 2001; Nice and Grosse 2001; Bovens *et al.* 2001; Boin 2004; Bovens and 'tHart 2004; Boin *et al.* 2005).

1.1 International Relations Perspectives

The international relations perspective was the first field in social science to use the term crisis management. Although the label has now spread across disciplines, the outputs of what Gilbert (1998) defined as the 'pattern of war' paradigm has had a pervasive influence on subsequent crisis research, mainly because it is intelligible and clear (Gilbert 1998: 12). However, the prevalence of these perspectives and the tendency for its researchers to define crises rather rigidly as transparent external threats to survival has led to criticism. The most notable critique relates to their application in domestic political systems where it has been noted that the thinking of 'political and public servants, as well as the representatives of citizens and scientists' has been 'trapped by the traditional overemphasis on a war rhetoric' (Gilbert 1998: 12). Ultimately, this overemphasis resulted in emergency planning

frameworks and crisis management practices that remained static. State authorities were prepared for the consequences of war or crisis events that posed 'war like' contingencies (such as large disasters) but remained unprepared for the socio-technical and economic risks created within modern society (Rosenthal 1998; Gilbert 1998).

Definitions of crisis derived from international relations studies share two common features. First, they tend to conceptualise a crisis as an event that challenges the critical variables that maintain *stability* in a political system (see Hermann 1972: 10). The characterisation of crises using this 'systemic approach' suggests a relationship between an event and structural change or conflict, either actually or potentially. Importantly, these definitions, *inter alia*, suggest that systems which are politically stable may be more resilient to crisis and that political stability may be an important resource for the management of crisis. This proposition will be built upon in future chapters. Definitions of this type remain influential in many other crisis studies that do not focus on international relations. In particular, the definition of crises as a state of instability or discontinuity in which institutional structures change has been used frequently (Kingdon 1984; Wildavsky 1988; Keeler 1994; Brecher and Wilkenfield 1997; Boin and 'tHart 2000; Boin *et al.* 2005). The second constituent of a crisis definition in the international relations literature is that crises are essentially *occasions for unique forms of decision-making* (Allison and Zelikow 1999). The word crisis is itself a derivative of the Greek *krisis*, literally meaning decision. A crisis therefore can be defined through observing the unique nature of decision making and the behaviour of those responsible for making decisions, rather than more 'objective' characteristics.

If the number and longevity of citations is a yardstick of academic success, then the most influential contribution in terms of crisis definition from this field comes from the work of Charles Hermann (1963;1972). Hermann determined a crisis through three generic traits:

A crisis is a situation that; (1) *threatens* the high-priority goals of the decision-making unit; (2) restricts the amount of *time* available for the response before the decision is transformed; and (3) *surprises* the members of the decision making unit by its occurrence. (Hermann 1972: 13, emphasis added)

Looking chronologically across the spectrum of crisis definitions and the research efforts that came out of each definition, it is hard to find any that are truly independent of Hermann. Rather than starting from a novel departure point, crisis researchers have tended to adapt Hermann's determinants to create conceptualisations that match their own experience and capabilities. The work of the international relations paradigm can be seen, therefore, as the historical root of much contemporary crisis research in other fields, which characterise crises as: acute sudden events with quantitative hazards; critical junctures in 'paths dependencies'; or, via generic situational determinants that create unique decision making occasions. An emphasis on decision making in particular runs like a thread through the majority of studies.

1.2 Disaster Perspectives

Sociological Approaches

In the last quarter of the twentieth-century sociologists increasingly drew on the earlier work of disaster researchers, such as Prince (1920), Carr (1932) and Sorokin (1942) in order to move away from the international relations paradigm. They argued that disaster and crisis should be studied through social groups, because the production and impact of disruptive events were intrinsically social in nature. The reaction of sociologists is inevitable, according to Gilbert (1998:14), because the 'war patterns' paradigm literally places the sources of risk outside of society and into the international environment, thus ignoring the social aspects of crisis. New sociological definitions also brought about new modes of analysis, based on the notion of *social cause and consequence*. As a result of this conceptual

shift, disasters began to be viewed by sociologists as the result of social consequences and domestic relations rather than conflict or external threat (Gilbert 1998: 14).

In 1932, Lewis Carr became the first sociologist to publish an account of disasters that suggested that human activities, rather than natural or supernatural forces, were the true cause of catastrophe (see Quarantelli 1998 for accounts of Carr's influence on the field). It is worth noting here that most students of crisis eschew the distinction between natural and technological disasters within their definitions. The dichotomy is less a statement of causation than a remnant of earlier beliefs that certain crises are the natural work of providence and, therefore, unaffected by human action. Disruptive events, according to Carr however, are principally man-made when defined simply as the process and consequences of collapsing cultural protections:

Not every windstorm, earth tremor, or rush of water is a catastrophe. A catastrophe is known by its works; that is, to say, by the occurrence of disaster. So long as the ship rides out the storm, so long as the city resists the earth-shocks, so long as the levees hold, there is no disaster. It is the collapse of the cultural protections that constitutes the disaster proper. (Carr 1932: 211)

Carr's arguments are maintained today by sociologists like Dombrowsky (1998: 21), for example, who argues that to focus on a 'stand alone' cause or on a single event as a referent is to reify an abstraction into a 'something' because 'there is no distinction between a disaster and ("its") effects. Disasters do not cause effects. The effects are what we call disaster' (Dombrowsky 1998: 21). Sociologists not only agree that disasters are caused by pathologies within social systems but also argue that they can only be defined through the damage caused to cultural protections. This line of argumentation is important for two reasons. First, it moves away from a belief in short-term causation, to one where every disaster can be seen as an acute event substantially affected by individual and social action across a broad time-scale. Second, it follows that no disaster or crisis can be described as an

act of providence: someone at some point is at fault, either for creating the pathologies that caused the disaster or for increasing levels of vulnerability. The development of a fault-finding culture in relation to crisis management raises the political stakes attached to decision making. Those decisions that are identified as increasing levels of vulnerability will attract sanctions while strong crisis leaders who 'right the wrongs' of previous decisions will receive rewards. These issues are important because they suggest that contemporary assessments of vulnerability must broaden out to encompass many different institutions and that crisis analysts acknowledge the political dimensions of disaster management. In both these cases, the study of the representative assembly is appropriate.

Dombrowsky (1998: 22-23) also offers four worthwhile categorisations of the ways in which disasters and crises are conceptualised. First, disasters and crises conceived as discrete events categorised via time, space or severity. Second, the stagist or phase model approach, which is similar to the event concept, but with a broader time scheme. In this approach the event(s) are dissected into a series of 'stages' or phases for ease of analysis. This approach shares the advantages and disadvantages of the stagist model used so frequently in policy analysis. Its fundamental weaknesses and its attractiveness to researchers are both related to the artificiality imposed on the unit of analysis. Dissecting a crisis into stages simplifies a complex process for more effective learning yet, in doing so, modifies the very nature of the phenomena being studied, changing it from its 'natural' state to one which is more conducive to academic purposes. Third, ratio definitions or lack of capacity definitions define a crisis as too fast, too costly or too overwhelming for existing mechanisms. A prime example of this type of definition has been proposed by Korac-Kakabadse *et al.* (2002: 38). According to this research, crises occur when existing distributive mechanisms are overwhelmed and there is a need for major resource (re) distribution. Fourth, organisational sociologists, such as Perrow (1999) and Turner (1978), use definitions influenced by natural

sciences and technological studies. These definitions, labelled by Dombrowsky (1998: 23) as the 'systemic catalyst type', tend to view crises or disasters as the outcome of misdirected energy in a system at the wrong time and the wrong place (Turner 1978), or as the 'normal' side effects of complex, integrated systems (Perrow 1999).

A major cleavage between disciplines was created with a series of definitions that distinguished crises from disasters. Enrico Quarantelli, for example, has championed the concept of community disasters for over 40 years by promoting a definition which separates an acute disaster from the broader concept of crisis. The distinctions that sociologists draw when separating crisis and disaster can obviously help to elucidate the characteristics of contemporary crises. According to Quarantelli, disasters are the agents of crisis or vice versa. Disasters can lead to crises and crisis contexts are also more likely to produce vulnerable environments where acute incidents can incubate. This is one rationale behind Quarantelli's (1998) belief that a wider crisis management framework represents a suitable home within which disaster studies should reside. Quarantelli (1998: 23) distinguishes between crisis and community disasters on empirical, theoretical and logical grounds. Two of these distinctions are worth dwelling on. First, community disasters do not involve *conflict*. Disasters promote consensus about objectives but crises are often characterised by conflicts (Rosenthal *et al.* 1991). This excludes war, politics, riots, civil disturbances, and terrorism, for example, from the scope of disaster researchers. As a result, conflict tends to be viewed as one element of a wider crisis context which envelops a disaster. Furthermore, a disaster should be a relatively focused spatio-temporal event with an element of suddenness and a discrete beginning and end (Quarantelli 1998). For this reason, problems involving long chronologies and entrenched chronic social issues, such as epidemics, famines and droughts should be defined as crises not disasters. The efforts of sociologists such as Quarantelli have been rewarded. Community level physical disasters are the location of most contemporary

disaster research (Barton 1989: 348). More important to this thesis, however, is the distinction Quarantelli drew between disaster and the wider concept of crisis. The two terms up until this point had been used interchangeably and research efforts tended to reflect this uncertainty (Shaluf *et al.* 2003). The separation of terminology has allowed crisis management to develop into a distinct field that is more conceptually holistic. Disaster research now represents one strand in a far larger crisis literature.

'Rational Hazard' Approaches

Overarching all the definitions provided above and below are two principle orientations to crisis research, namely, an applied/practitioner orientation and a theoretical academic perspective. These approaches are demarcated epistemologically and ontologically. Practitioner approaches tend to apply widely known intuitive and simple logic methods to create contingency planning documents and normative planning guides. Technocratic efforts of this kind are classified here as part of a rational 'hazards' paradigm (Hewitt 1998). The style of these prescriptions, which are designed for the operational dimensions of crisis management, will be familiar to critics of positivist inquiry in western countries. It is the rational-positivistic core, however, that 'helps identify why the hazards paradigm has proved so robust a social construction for mainstream studies' (Hewitt 1998: 79).

Rational hazards definitions, found for example within government literature on disaster and crisis responses, have influenced a swathe of normative and practical research aimed at planning and prevention policies for the practitioner (Keller and Al-madhari 1996; Mitroff 1988; De Sousa Jr 2000). These definitions ubiquitously focus on crises as hazardous events, with the quantification of impact consequences as the starting point for definitions. For example, the Cabinet Office document, *Dealing with Disaster*, which outlined the coordination of the disaster response framework in the United Kingdom before 2004,

defined these occurrences as, 'any event or circumstance (happening with or without warning) that causes or threatens death or injury, disruption to the community, or damage to property or to the environment' (Cabinet Office 2003: 1). The United Nation's Environmental Programme (UNEP) also uses this type of criteria. A crisis can only be considered as such if it provokes a situation with 25 or more fatalities; 125 or more injuries; 10,000 or more evacuees; 10,000 or more persons deprived of water, or US\$10million or more in damages (UNEP-APELL 2002). Further examples of this approach to definition and the research it has driven can be found across US emergency planning literature; UK civil planning and protection work; in various international crisis and disaster databases; and, in a body of rational-technical literature that is designed for practitioners rather than academics (Drabek 1985; Handmer and Parker 1991; Hills 1994; FEMA 1994). This practical strand of research is of relevance to this project because it relates directly to the crisis management frameworks of the state. In the public sector, the rational 'hazard' paradigm has had the greatest impact. Administrative crisis managers within government are most likely to define themselves and their duties with reference to these perspectives.

1.3 Organisational, Corporate and Industrial Perspectives

Crisis literature has a strong orientation towards managerial issues. Managerial perspectives, however, tend to interpret crises rather exclusively in functionalist-technocratic terms with analyses directed towards the improved design of organisational practice. In this respect, the huge amount of what some call 'soft core' crisis literature (Korac-Boisvert and Kouzmin 1994) is similar to the rational-technical disaster research, as its roots are found in rational theory designed for the action setting. The instrumentalist orientation dominating the organisational field is also similar to the rational 'hazard' research in that its philosophical, epistemological and normative assumptions are based on a view of crises as objective events that can be controlled and managed. Criticisms of these assumptions can be seen as one

impetus behind the emergence of contemporary research which addresses the subjective and political elements of crises (see below). The emphasis on management, however, has spurred a deluge of practitioner-orientated handbooks specifying detailed 'how-to's' of crisis management best practice (Fink 1986; Raphael 1986; Nudell and Anthokol 1988; Register 1989; Hodgkinson and Stewart 1991; Pauchant and Mitroff 1992).

Threats in this paradigm relate to issues of product and development failure, management failure, dramatic market shifts, changes in stakeholder perception, boycotts and embargoes or just plain old organisational failure! Nevertheless, organisational theory has always tended to transfer across social science disciplines quite easily and this remains the case in terms of crisis literature. Mitroff and Kilmann, writing during the cold war era, provided one reason for this when they justified the importance of organisational thinking in crisis literature:

In a world facing the biggest tragedy, and unthinkable of all, nuclear holocaust, the reader has good reason to ask why we have deliberately restricted our focus to tragedies committed against organizations. Our answer is that society is built up of organizations. Governments, industry, education and healthcare, are all made up of organizations that exist in an environment of other organizations. All of the tragedies and unthinkable acts that affect organizations or are created by organisations must ultimately be managed by them. (Mitroff and Kilmann 1984: 9)

Some organisational theorists disagree with Quarantelli's pursuit of a common definition and shared crisis language. Their contention is that the research of crises is impeded when scientists attempt to structure 'natural messes' into ordered scientific models (Mitroff *et al.* 2004). The postulation here is that when researchers impose heuristic order into what is essentially an ill-structured mess, they are no longer faithfully recording a real crisis but are instead creating their own artificial construct:

The repeated call for agreement on a basic definition of what is a 'disaster' versus what is a 'crisis' ignores the basic character of ill-structured problems.

Such problems are those for which fundamental and strongly felt differences not only exist but predominate. Intense disagreement over what is happening, who should be in charge, and what needs to be done is a major feature of studying ill-structured problems. To insist, therefore, on agreement as a precondition for studying ill-structured problems is to ignore and deny their basic nature. It is to misrepresent them ontologically. In sum, if we could obtain prior agreement on the definition or nature of ill structured problems, then they would not be ill-structured ... Thus, we have to learn to study or to inquire into ill-structured problems as a phenomenon in and of themselves. (Mitroff *et al.* 2004: 175)

Two points are worth noting from this argument. First, crisis analysis can become political if it is drawn into conflicts over what is and what is not a crisis and crises themselves can be political, if characterised by conflicts over decision making authority and structure. Second, the normal process of scientific inquiry may be a problem in itself for researching crises. More often than not, artificial and erroneous definitions are guaranteed because of attempts to bring scientific order to a very unscientific occurrence.

Corporate crisis managers have also given the most attention to the role of the *media and communication* in a crisis, which is another relevant branch of research. Communication in particular has been a dimension of crisis management that has been researched extensively as a crisis characteristic and as a management tool. Michael Bland (1995: 4), for example, argues that 'at its simplest, a crisis can be defined as unexpected bad publicity' while Pijnenburg and van Duin (1991: 70) have contended that 'most of the time crises situations turn out to be, to a large extent information and communication crises'. Numerous organisational studies across quite a large timeframe have analysed the requirements for ensuring effective communication channels during crisis management episodes (Dynes 1978; Lerbringer 1980; Lagadec 1987; Garnett 1992; Cushing 1994; Smart and Vertinsky 2006). Others have identified communication as one influence in the reduction of vulnerability levels (Mitroff and Pearson 1993). The communicatory factors that influence the ways in which individuals and groups respond to crisis warnings have also been analysed (Perry 1985; Cushing 1994) as has the role of mass communication (Burkhart 1991; Raboy

and Dagenais 1992; Smith 1992; Barton 1993). This work links comfortably with symbolic perspectives of crisis through the concept of 'framing' (see below).

Organisational crisis literature, however, remains un-integrated to a large extent and has historically shared the same problems of co-ordination that typifies all crisis disciplines. One organisational commentator provided an accurate assessment of the state of the art in the 1990s. Unfortunately, the problems identified below still remain relevant today:

Organisational theories of crisis management have not yet produced an overarching schema - this area of management is still in its infancy. Instead, the literature offers a range of specialist contributions. Problems in sorting out a structure for the study and practice of crisis management are also created because the meaning of much descriptive terminology is still being agreed, as contributors to the literature seek to create a common language ... In short, there remains much overlap and confusion on the issue of crisis types and there is an absence of an overriding classificatory framework for the practice and study of crisis management. (Richardson 1994: 62)

1.4 Economic-Structural Perspectives

An extremely influential strand of crisis research is normative, theoretical and predominantly Marxist in origin (O'Connor 1973; Habermas 1975; Gough 1979; Offe 1984; Beck 1992; Hay 1994). These theorists focus on the structural features of the state and capitalist economies, which they identify as being incapable of managing the acute crises caused by capitalist accumulation. To the majority of these commentators, many of the acute emergencies that we see emerging almost daily in states around the world and the 'chronic' crises that have gone unresolved for decades are symptoms of a deeper malaise, usually attributed to the contradictory nature of capitalism in western societies. This contradictory nature, as viewed through these perspectives, is worth summarising briefly because it provides a clear link between the state and the manifestation and management of crisis, albeit in an abstract, theoretical sense.

The state in western capitalist economies can be seen at the centre of a contradiction between two logics: the logic of capitalist accumulation and the logic of popular legitimisation (O'Connor 1973). On one hand, democratic processes attempt to build legitimacy and consent within capitalist states through the extension of social welfare provision, increased political participation and drives towards social equality. In this sense, the state is attempting to 'win the loyalty of economically exploited and socially oppressed classes and strata of the population to its programs and policies, and to the imperatives of accumulation; it must attempt to legitimate the social order' (O'Connor 1973: 79). However, the encroachment of the state's responsibilities in these areas (and the corresponding rise in taxation and public spending) constrains the requirements of capital accumulation by restricting economic growth (through restricting profit levels or discouraging investment, for example). Without economic growth, social provision suffers and the state's legitimacy will be affected. Thus, capitalism places the state at the centre of a contradiction.

This contradiction, according to these perspectives, is impossible to control within a capitalist framework. The result of this failure is the manifestation of economic, social and political 'crisis tendencies' which become entrenched structurally (O'Connor 1973: 82). Thus, fiscal crises result when the state bankrolls social provision yet the social surplus (including profits) is appropriated privately, meaning that there is a gap between expenditure and revenue. Social crises result through the appropriation of state power for particularistic ends, and political crises are caused because claims made for social capital and societal expenses from groups in society are decided upon within a political framework. The allocation of social capital through political struggles can be conceived as a state exercise in the generation of legitimacy because allocations of social capital, in essence, are made by political decision makers in order to attract popular approval. From a market orientated perspective, this type of political allocation is characterised by 'waste' and 'duplication' and

suffers from deficiencies in 'administrative coherence, fiscal stability and rationality' (O'Connor 1973: 83).

Habermas, argues in the *Legitimation Crisis*, that the failure of various governments during the 1970s to resolve the fiscal crisis (state expenditure not matching revenue) led to delegitimising public perceptions about social democratic ideology and state expansionist policy, which in turn helped exacerbate the major economic crises experienced during those times. Faced with either resisting popular pressures for social goods or risking economic slowdown or even collapse, political elites in these societies found it increasingly difficult to maintain the legitimacy of socialist ideology and policies. In other words, the contradiction between accumulation and legitimisation led to problems in economic growth, which in turn created a 'motivation crisis' in society, where the public began to look unfavourably at the expansion of social provision through the state. This, in turn, led to the de-legitimation of the large-scale social welfare projects that dominated many government agendas in the post-war period.

These authors stipulate how political and bureaucratic elites can never truly escape these tensions in the absence of radical structural reform. What this means is that the modern capitalist system is prone to crisis. From this view, structural problems that entrench the legitimisation-accumulation problem will manifest themselves in the form of so called 'chronic' crises: over-production; resource depletion; under-production; sharp inequalities in resource distribution; the formation of 'underclasses', and perhaps most importantly; the further degradation and abuse of the environment.

The role of the state in crisis management, according to these perspectives, is straightforward; it cannot deal with the side effects of capitalism (acute crises), and, while

the state remains part of a capitalist system, it will incubate, facilitate and ultimately mismanage acute crises. This argument is extremely important. A central theme in the analytical framework of this thesis is that the state has the potential to incubate or escalate crises and policy failure. Although these authors suggest that the ultimate cause of crises is the capitalist system, what can also be suggested from their work is the idea that the structure of the state plays a part in the development of acute crises. Not only does the state assist in the facilitation of some crises but it also 'displaces' the very nature of certain events by redefining explanations about their cause and the solutions required for their (mis)management (Hay 1994 provides a concise synopsis of this argument). Indeed, this type of economic-structural literature has informed a number of research endeavours that pay attention to the relationship between state and society during various stages of crisis (Ben-Zadok 2001; Bovens and 'tHart 2004). More perspectives relating to state causation and escalation will be outlined in chapter two. Marxist perspectives, nevertheless, provide us with our first insight into this argument.

1.5 Modern Crisis Management Perspectives

According to Uriel Rosenthal (2003), mainstream public administration and political science has struggled to come to terms with the study of crisis because of what Hewitt (1983) calls the 'un-ness' of crises. The fact that crises are unscheduled, unexpected, unstructured and unplanned phenomenon has meant that they have never been fully accepted as units of analysis by most policy and public administration scholars. For a long period, the few students of crises and crisis management in this area 'were seen as sectarians working in the periphery of a discipline, struggling for recognition by more rigorous branches of the social sciences' (Rosenthal 2003: 130). Today, however, those that struggled for acceptance within the public administration and policy science fields are leading the European crisis management agenda, as the subject grows into a discipline in its own right.

Modern crises tend to be classified as an abstract set of phenomena within which the paradigms noted above are seen as sub-categories. Uriel Rosenthal, for example, contends that a broad definition of crisis can provide enough conceptual breadth to conjoin the separated disciplines together:

Opting for crisis as a generic concept creates new opportunities for the exchange of knowledge between hitherto separated scholarly worlds. Although once popular among the founders of the social sciences, for a considerable period of time, crisis used to be the pet concept of experts in international relations. They kept the concept for themselves, demarcating the empirical domain by exclusive reference to the threat of war. They did not appreciate the potentialities of a wider application of the concept and crisis-derived hypotheses and propositions, leaving such efforts to others. On the other hand, those working in other domains (disasters, riots and turmoil, terrorism and hijackings, ecological threat, corporate disturbances such as produce recall) developed their own bodies of knowledge or, as in the case of disaster research, had already settled for their own terms, concepts, and theoretical perspectives. With the end of the cold war, clear-cut nuclear threat has given way to an overall sense of *uncertainty* ... Future disasters will be part of the world of crises. They will be transnational, mediatized, and highly politicised. For that matter, future disasters will be genuine crises. (Rosenthal 1998: 227, emphasis added)

Hermann's original definition of crisis required adjustment, it was argued, because it excluded too many crises:

In order to render the concept suitable for the wider context of social, political and organizational circumstances, it would be necessary to formulate the reference point of threat in a broader sense; it is not only goals that are involved. Threat may be more subtle than immediate survival. The crisis decision-making situation is, nevertheless, characterized by the necessity to make critical choices. This is particularly so with protracted crises or 'creeping crises', especially social, political or even environmental crises which take some time to develop into more conventionally understood acute or dramatic events. The third defining feature - the surprise element - presents numerous problems. It would be more appropriate to view the surprise element as only one of many factors that can lead to a relatively high degree of *uncertainty* and view high uncertainty as a defining feature of crisis situations. (Rosenthal and Kouzmin 1997: 279, emphasis added)

Gilbert (1998: 16) correctly recognises that modern forms of crisis research developed out of a new paradigm which placed 'uncertainty', as the core feature of 'new' crises. Uncertainty reflects the nature of managing through a crisis. It is evident, for example, when crises

destabilise the relations between various actors, the decision making structures they rely on and it is also prevalent during the post-crisis 'blaming' period of politicised drama. Uncertainty is also evident when actors and agencies lose their own underlying logics, their communication networks, knowledge standpoints, competence areas and mental habits during a crisis (Booth 1993; Dombrowsky 1998). Uncertainty can also cause crises. For example, literature on risk highlights ways in which scientific uncertainty can become a causal dynamic in the creation of a crisis situation. The archetypal 'modern' crisis parable, BSE in the British food chain, is often used as an example in this sense (Hood *et al.* 2001; Weale 2002; Forbes 2004). In sum, uncertainty is a situational determinant during crisis and as societies grow in socio-cultural and productive complexity it can also be a causal variable.

Rosenthal and his colleagues, working from public administration and policy analysis perspectives, promote a version of crisis as 'a serious *threat* to the basic structures or the fundamental values and norms of a social system, which - under *time pressures* and highly *uncertain* circumstances - necessitates making critical *decisions*' (Rosenthal *et al.* 1989: 10). The lineage of this definition can clearly be traced back to Charles Hermann. However, this is a more inclusive definition because the threat and surprise elements of Hermann's characterisation are softer, thus allowing for events that have elongated time-frames; risks that are calculable yet diffuse in nature; and, manifestations that are not always life threatening yet jeopardise fundamental values. However, differentiated (crisis) decision making remains the definition's central reference point. The great advantage of this conceptualisation, according to Boin (2004: 167), is that it applies 'to all types of disruption' from ecothreats to IT crashes and that it draws attention to the need for a 'multidisciplinary approach to understanding crises' (Boin 2004: 167). Furthermore, Dror *et al.* (2001: 343) have accentuated the contemporary influence of Hermann through the addition of another determinant - *inconceivability* - to the nature of the modern crisis. Care must be taken,

however, not to stress too heavily the emphasis that these authors place on defining crises via these characteristics because they also recognise that crises can often be subjectively defined phenomena. Certain actors will define events affecting them as crises yet others 'routinely accept and live with seemingly worse events' (Boin 2004: 167):

Crises cannot, therefore, be studied in absolute terms. Crises give rise to multiple, if not divergent perceptions and definitions of the situation. A social and political construction by itself, a crisis should be explored in terms of multiple realities. (Rosenthal *et al.* 2001: 7)

These authors locate contemporary crises within an increasingly modern and complex world. Emerging crises mirror today's context; forces of globalisation, de-regulation and advances in information and communication technology mean that they are neither spatially nor chronologically confined. These same forces can take small problems - that in other historical periods would remain contained - and escalate them into international crises (Boin and 'tHart 2003: 545). They can stretch across small and large timeframes and change shape, shifting from operational emergencies to political scandals, for example.

1.6 The First Connection: Legitimacy, Symbolic Outputs and Representative Assemblies

New avenues of research from the modern crisis management paradigm have promoted 'politico-symbolic' approaches to understanding crises ('tHart 1993; Boin 2004; Boin *et al.* 2005). These literatures are used below to build one specific element of the thesis's analytical framework. This element is developed through an argument that representative assemblies can affect the legitimacy of crisis management authorities by producing 'symbolic outputs'.

Symbolic perspectives grew out of critiques of the managerial orientation within crisis

studies and introduced political concepts into crisis analysis for the first time (see 'tHart 1993: 37). Politico-symbolic strands of research therefore offer an additional series of 'constructivist' insights into crises which reflect changing academic trends. According to one author:

Crises and crisis management are both inherently complex and politically controversial phenomena; ones which can only be analysed to the full extent if the managerial, functionalist decision making approach is complemented by, and contrasted with, a more power-critical perspective ... one useful set of tools lending themselves to a power-critical analysis of the dynamics of crises and of prevalent crisis management practices can be found in theory and research on the symbolic dimensions of politics and administration. ('tHart 1993: 37)

These approaches can be used to link representative assemblies to crisis management because they define and research crises in political terms. Connections can be made because parliamentary scholars and 'politico-symbolic' crisis researchers both examine issues of *authority, legitimacy and power*. Importantly, crisis analysts using these perspectives also stress how *legitimacy dynamics* are a central characteristic of a crisis and crucial to an understanding of crisis management. Thus, crises are defined by these commentators as 'a breakdown of familiar symbolic frameworks legitimating the pre-existing socio-political order' ('tHart 1993: 40) or as 'dynamic forces in ongoing processes of legitimization, delegitimization, and relegitimization of the social order, in particular the prevailing patterns of political and administrative authority' ('tHart and Boin 2001: 31). In addition, it has also been argued that declines in the legitimacy of an under-performing institutional structure can escalate certain types of crises (Boin and 'tHart 2000: 11; Boin 2004: 167) and that organisations need legitimacy to manage crises successfully (de Vroom 2001; Hansen and Stern 2001; Rosenthal *et al.* 2001; Boin and 'tHart 2003).

Ultimately, these approaches all suggest that 'the currency of crisis is legitimacy' (Boin 2004: 167), which is an extremely important argument within this thesis because the concept

of legitimacy can be used to connect parliamentary, representation and crisis management literatures. These specific connections will be developed throughout the early chapters of the thesis underneath a claim that *the (potential) importance of UK parliaments to crisis management primarily relates to the effects they could have over legitimacy and support dynamics*. More specifically, it is argued that crisis management authorities require legitimacy to act effectively; that crises themselves will encourage fluctuations in the support that those authorities enjoy; and, that representative assemblies can perform functions which affect the degree of support and legitimacy that authorities enjoy during a crisis episode. In this chapter only one of these functions - the production of 'symbolic outputs' - is focused upon. This is because this function emerges solely from examinations of crisis management literature. Later chapters will explore more functions relating to legitimacy dynamics, which emerge from reviews of parliamentary literature.

The importance of the claim that parliaments can affect legitimacy dynamics demands further discussion. A starting point for this discussion is the concept of 'output legitimacy' used in the policy sciences (see Hanberger 2003; Meunier 2003; Papadopoulos 2003; Skogstad 2003), which is based upon the idea that legitimacy has a rational utilitarian dimension. The concept of specific support is also instructive in this regard. Specific support is 'directed to the perceived decisions, policies, actions, utterances or the general style' of those authorities that produce tangible political output (Easton 1975: 437). In both cases, support and legitimacy for government authorities is predicated on a relationship between an audience's needs, wants and demands on the one hand and the behaviour of those authorities capable of meeting such needs on the other. Both specific support and output legitimacy, while connected to 'regime' or state legitimacy conceptually, can fluctuate regardless of the legitimate status of the larger state structure.

Unlike regime legitimacy, support for authorities is susceptible to frequent change because it is sourced from beliefs about the validity, behaviour or personal qualities of each individual authority (Easton 1965: 286). These behaviours and qualities, unlike the structures or ideologies of the state, are far more variable and, therefore, likely to fluctuate in terms of the supportive sentiments that they attract. Authorities can maintain a stable level of legitimacy, according to Easton (1965: 280), if they are nested within a larger system that attracts 'regime' legitimacy and, importantly if their activities and outputs fall within what is perceived to be a 'definable range' of acceptable behaviour. What this means is that authorities do not have to excel in the execution of activities or the production of outputs to generate support and legitimacy for themselves. While nested within a legitimate regime, authorities only have to avoid those activities and outputs which will be viewed reprehensibly - only activities that fall far outside the 'definable range' of acceptability will lead to a withdrawal of support and a process of de-legitimisation. In most well developed political systems, stability is the norm because of the compound of regime legitimacy and the performance of authorities that, more or less, do enough of the things which are expected of them to ensure their own survival. However, excessively bad performance will lead to a loss of support and confidence, either from elites with the power to reform, the general public or specific stakeholder groups. A crisis is perhaps the most vivid manifestation of a significant policy failure(s). As the discussion of disaster sociology noted, there is today an increased willingness to scrutinise governmental actions and assign blame for the occurrence and mismanagement of crises. Major crises therefore encourage fluctuations in the support and legitimacy that authorities enjoy because they are viewed as avoidable and unacceptable - they highlight performance levels outside of the 'definable range'. In some cases, ineffective crisis management levels can lead to acute disasters where loss of life or economic breakdown is starkly exposed. If authorities are blamed for causing

or exacerbating such events, support and confidence wilts, legitimacy declines and reforms take place. Positive dynamics can also occur as crises can generate opportunities and rewards for authorities. Crises may expose authorities that perform heroically as they are forced to act outside the 'definable range' of every day activities expected of them. These authorities may benefit from a growth in support and confidence. Crises can also have cathartic effects which mobilise political support for the ambitious policy entrepreneur or assist the proposal of a transformative policy innovation and, at least temporarily, put an end to 'muddling through' administratively (Kingdon 1984; Keeler 1993; Nice and Gross 2001). The symbolism involved in defining an event as a crisis can also have positive connotations for the legitimation of state action. Thus, according to Edelman (1977: 47) 'any regime that prides itself on crisis management is sure to find crises to manage, and crisis management is always available as a way to mobilize support'. This combination of punishments and rewards in terms of the support that authorities experience is what is meant here by the term legitimacy dynamics. It is important to note, however, that the analytical focus of this thesis is not specifically trained towards these dynamics. Establishing that legitimacy fluctuations have occurred is the starting point for more specific analysis, as the focus of the thesis is trained towards determining how legitimacy dynamics can be influenced by representative assemblies. The remainder of this chapter raises the argument that the production of 'symbolic outputs' is one possible way that this could occur.

Murray Edelman's work directs us towards another analytical theme found in the politico-symbolic literature, which relates to the symbolic nature of political communication during crises. The argument presented below is that representative assemblies can influence legitimacy dynamics by engaging in forms of symbolic political communication.

Executive authorities often lose control of their grip on communication during severe crises ('tHart 1993; Boin *et al.* 2005). In these times, crisis communication turns into a contest over the construction of meaning given to issues and actions. In every crisis, those authorities that will be held responsible (or culpable) for a crisis response will quickly seek to direct or influence public opinion and behaviour. However, the 'construction' of crises and the proposal of crisis management solutions tends to involve a large number of groups within, but also outside, government circles ('tHart 1993: 37; Boin *et al.* 2005: 71-72). Paul 'tHart provides an insight into the nature of the politics played out during crisis episodes:

The most important instrument of crisis management is language. Those who are able to define what the crisis is all about also hold the key to defining the appropriate strategies for resolution. Conversely, for those who seek to instigate change, it is of vital importance to be able to aggravate the sense of societal crisis so as to foster a psychological and political climate receptive to non-incremental change. Much of the conflict in crises centres around the various stakeholders attempts to impose their definition of the situation on others. They do so by employing different languages, selectively exploiting data and arguments and forming discourse coalitions with like minded groups. Indeed, one way of looking at the communication dimensions in crises is in terms of the continuum between controlled and uncontrolled formats of communication. ('tHart 1993: 41)

The construction of crisis 'realities' and the formulation of solutions, therefore, will emerge from a melange of interactions, negotiations and claims championed through numerous groups. Importantly, this literature often refers to national parliaments (albeit in a cursory and descriptive manner) as one institution within this collective process, primarily because parliaments can provide 'dramatic representations' of policies and politics, which lend themselves to articulation through the mass media ('tHart 1993: 38; Boin *et al.* 2005: 75). However, the role of the parliament has never been the sole focus of sustained analysis. These perspectives, however, do provide analytical apparatus capable of structuring research into the potential importance of parliaments in this regard. Three types of symbolic output can be searched for in terms of parliamentary involvement - framing, rituals and masking

(see 'tHart 1993 for a broader discussion of these strategies).

Framing

The concept of framing has been used to analyse aspects of conscious and unconscious social constructivism in the crisis management process ('tHart 1993; Eriksson 2001; Brandstorm and Kuipers 2003; Boin *et al.* 2005). According to Snow and Benford, the basic concept of a frame:

Refers to an interpretative schemata that simplifies the world out there by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present and past environment. In Goffman's words, frames allow individuals "to locate perceive, identify and label events within their life space or the world at large". (Snow and Benford 1998:127; Goffman 1974:21)

Specific support for crisis actions can be generated through a process of cognitive 'framing'. When actions are interpreted within an institutionalised frame of reference they gain cognitive legitimacy because they have a degree of inter-subjective comprehensibility. The logic and organisation of the state, incorporated through the constitutional 'rules of the game', and the familiarity of parliament within those rules, allow us to interpret and construct shared narratives about political life. Political crises and their solutions are framed, therefore, when they are placed into the familiar norms and procedures of the state (Hay 1994; Ruggie 1998; Eriksson 2001). Placing an issue into the structure of the state simplifies it in cognitive terms, making it understandable to various publics and, simultaneously, legitimises the state's 'right' to manage the problem (Hay 1994; Eriksson 2001). Some commentators define framing of this sort as an unconscious, rather than a conscious or purposive, process (Hay 1994: 85-86). If constitutional and political system norms affect the manner in which crisis phenomena are perceived by publics:

We must return to the study of the very basic functions of society and politics. Fears, threats, and risk - or whatever we call these ubiquitous problems of life - are ultimately legitimating our polities. They fuel collective identity - the separation of a familiar 'us' from a threatening 'them' - and justify power - the separation of ruler from the ruled. It would definitely be an advancement if the specialised scholars in security studies, risk studies and crisis management would at least on occasion address these questions, not as something particular for their sub fields, but as the general problems that they are. This requires a readiness to communicate across academic boundaries. (Eriksson 2001: 224)

Issue framing is also an instrumental political phenomenon. Although the framing process begins with political leaders, 'conduits' are required to communicate and interpret a frame for the public (Jacoby 2000: 751). If organisations can articulate complex policies clearly through familiar forums then they can be legitimised by larger belief systems. This appears to be an area where parliaments may be involved during a crisis, which are essentially periods of uncertainty. If a parliament can contribute to our understanding of a crisis or help us understand the rationale behind a policy, then it can potentially facilitate cognitive legitimacy for that policy. Parliaments do provide a venue for communication between political and social systems that is predictable, meaningful and familiar. This means that they are a legitimate conduit for the articulation of crisis 'realities' during uncertain times. Admittedly, national parliaments are not as influential as the media in terms of communicating frames outward to the public; however, the representative assembly may have a more significant role in determining how issues are framed and perceived *within* the political system. In this sense, instrumental framing literature also describes an active process involving a conflict between groups over the social construction of events and the actions that will follow. For example, the so called 'Copenhagen School' within the international relations paradigm have produced significant research on how issues can be given greater status on a political agenda if they can be 'securitized' so as to be framed as security matters (see Buzan *et al.* 1998; Edelman 1997; Quarantelli 1998). According to one set of crisis authors:

Leaders typically use rhetorical and judicial languages in the open arenas of political meaning making. Strong rhetoric full of metaphors and emotive concepts is used to increase or dampen collective anxieties - the very act of labeling a particular set of social conditions a "crisis" is in itself a major communicative act with potentially far-reaching consequences. It makes quite a difference whether one labels events in terms of an "incident", an "accident", a "tragedy", a "disaster" or a "crisis". These terms convey different assessments of the situation in terms of its seriousness and the allocation of responsibility for it. Labels such as these invoke "archetypal narratives" that shape people's expectations about what is to follow, who is in charge, who are the heroes, and who are the villains of the story. (Boin *et al.* 2005: 82)

Crisis management studies tend to focus on instrumental attempts to frame issues at the acute stage (tHart 1993; Eriksson 2001) or the reconstruction of a version of events at the post-crisis inquiry stage (Brandstorm and Kuipers 2003). Approaches within crisis management and risk management, however, both suggest that risks can be framed by political elites to prioritise particular strategies during periods of normalcy (Sjoberg 1996; Jensen 2000; Steffen 2001). These arguments allow for the supposition that a legislature could be one arena used for political meaning making and the construction of crisis 'frames'. At least four studies support this argument. First, Ulf Bjerfeld (2001: 55) has used survey data comparing the risk perceptions of parliamentarians and the public to suggest that political elites (consciously or unconsciously) frame crisis policies in certain ways to ensure that they gain support. Second, Steffen (2001: 471) has argued that the way in which the AIDS epidemic was framed, partly through the electoral make up of France's representative chambers, led to an ineffective initial response. An influx of right wing parties and a downturn in socialist and communist fortunes in the 1980's, according to Steffen, acted as an impediment to an early and effective crisis response after HIV contaminated the blood donor supply, because the virus, and its sufferers, were framed in a negative light. Third, Brandstorm and Kuipers (2003: 293) directly refer to the involvement of the Swedish *Riksdag* in a process of framing post-crisis which allocated blame to particular political actors. Fourth, Boin *et al.* (2005: 108) cite legislators as one group of important actors capable of affecting 'meaning making' and 'blame games' post-crisis. While reference is made to parliaments in each of these

studies, none offers any substantive analysis of their role in great detail. The lack of attention given to representative assemblies, despite these references which allude to a potential importance, provides one rationale for making representative assemblies a unit of analysis in their own right.

In sum, a parliamentary system may play a role in crisis framing because of: 1) the state's ability to simplify, legitimise and frame crisis issues 'unconsciously'; 2) the ability of a representative assembly to communicate a crisis frame outward to the public or internally to components within the political system; 3) the ability of a representative assembly, as a forum for political conflict, to consciously influence the nature of a frame. Unconscious forms of framing are not the concern of this thesis. The focus of the research below will be directed towards instrumental forms of framing engaged in by specific actors and organisations. Operationalising research from the more theoretical framing literature is difficult because of its abstract nature and because the state as a whole, rather than parliaments or representative systems, are their primary unit of analysis (Hay 1994; Eriksson 2001). The methodological problems in such an exercise outweigh the number of insights that this literature could provide about the crisis management-parliament relationship. Instead, the focus of the empirical sections of the thesis will be trained towards purposive actors and organisations that seek to frame consciously, rather than the tacit effects of state structure and logic, because as units of analysis they offer more empirical 'purchase'.

Rituals

Another dimension of symbolic crisis communication relates to rituals, defined as symbolic behaviour that is socially standardised and repetitive (Kertzer 1988: 9). According to 'tHart (1993: 43-44), three types of ritual can be observed during crises. *Rituals of solidarity* are often used by actors to display public compassion and affinity for those affected by the

crisis. If politicians fail to show this compassion, political sanctions may follow. For example, in the wake of the Heysel Stadium disaster, the failure of the Belgian Minister for the Interior to appear publicly contrite led the post-crisis debate to focus on his personal role, which almost forced his resignation (tHart 1993: 43).

Rituals of reassurance and purification seek to assure publics that the authorities are in control, that panic is unwarranted, that partisan politics have been put to one side, and that every effort is being made to deal with the crisis. The purification element often comes in the form of identifying scapegoats or causes that have been dealt with, thus reassuring the public that the problem will not be repeated in the near future.

In one of the earliest studies to link policy analysis to crisis management, Robert Jackson provided case study evidence from fifteen crises that suggested a relationship between the manner in which crises are managed and the legitimacy of the political system (Jackson 1976: 209). In Jackson's crises, 'symbolic output' was presented and then coercive and ameliorative actions were implemented immediately. Jackson's research indicates that if the actions taken during a crisis are coercive or controversial then they will have to be complimented by symbolic output so that public criticism is avoided. In every case, governments attempted to reassure the public about their competence and the effectiveness of their plans throughout the stages of the crisis in order to maintain legitimacy. During social crises in particular, such symbolic outputs were felt to determine to some extent how the public regarded the government (1976: 224). Jackson describes a number of symbolic gestures across the crisis stages designed to 'reassure and purify', including: statements of intent; speeches; visits to disaster sites and victims; the association of decisions with emergency constitutional arrangements (dissolution of parliament; war measures acts); and, most importantly, notes how legislative bodies had a symbolic role post-crisis in 'debating

the issue and reassuring the public' (1976: 226-227).

Finally, *rituals of animosity* can create politically advantageous feelings of animosity which can promote support for crisis actions. The seizure of American embassy personnel in Tehran in the late 1970s provides a 'classic example' of this kind of symbolic gesture (Kertzer 1988; 'tHart 1993). This crisis was shown to the American people through symbols of national identity, democracy and terrorism. The comparison between this period and the current symbols constructed in defence of the 'war on terror' are obvious.

In general, the strategic use of rituals can be seen as part of the politician's crisis communication 'tool-kit'. It is likely that rituals will be used to generate support, justify crisis actions, and reassure those affected by crisis episodes and that parliamentary procedures could play a part in these strategies. This is not a novel supposition. One group of contemporary crisis commentators have already defined the national parliament as a venue for symbolic ritualising, albeit in a cursory manner:

Rituals follow highly structured, more or less standardized sequences and are often enacted at certain places and times, which themselves are endowed with special symbolic meaning. They are an important component of social and governmental responses to many different types of crises, as indeed they are of government and politics in normal times (think of election campaigns, annual budget speeches, parliamentary debating procedures). (Boin *et al.* 2005: 84-85)

Masking

Masking refers to another form of impression management in which those benefiting from the status quo attempt to mask vulnerabilities, errors or threats which may lead to unwanted reform. Masking requires external communications strategies and can take a number of forms ('tHart 1993), including, the communication of a 'business as usual' message or the redefinition or displacement of crises into other domains. Edelman (1977: 47), for example,

argues that problems that ‘impoverish or ruin millions of lives are not perceived as crises because we attach labels and “explanations” to them that portray them as natural and inevitable, or as caused by the people who suffer from them rather than by outside unexpected threats’. Crisis management details can also be obscured. For example, the use of data security or official secret acts may be used to prevent information reaching the public domain in order to safeguard public support for crisis actions. Counter symbolism can also be used by groups with little legitimate power to court public sympathy for their cause. Examples here include student uprisings that associate revolts with principles of democracy or constitutionalism or economic protests that link direct action to symbols suggesting that the ‘everyday man’ is tackling injustices.

Within a crisis process, authorities intent on surviving or seizing an opportunity must pay attention to legitimacy dynamics. Organisations may have to ‘manage’ their legitimacy strategically and engage in communication and symbolism which can influence audience evaluations of their performance. If legitimacy is promoted through rational, cognitive and moral evaluations by the wider society, as writers on legitimacy indicate (see Parsons 1960; Beetham 1991; Suchman 1995), *then legislatures that produce ‘symbolic outputs’ may be capable of affecting the legitimacy of specific authorities by influencing social and political evaluations of their performance.* The argument drawn from the politico-symbolic perspectives of crisis management is that representative assemblies appear to be natural venues for political actors to engage in forms of symbolic political communication. Ultimately, this may mean that the representative forum could prove a fertile ground for the analysis of crisis management politics.

1.6 Crisis Management and Parliamentary Analysis: Talking the Same Language

The first objective of this chapter was to provide a review of the development of crisis management definitions, disciplines and to introduce some broad research themes. The

second objective was to begin to make connections between representative assemblies and crisis management. In this regard, a specific argument was forwarded which connected representative assemblies to crisis management through the concept of legitimacy dynamics and symbolic forms of political communication. Several broad links were also established between crisis themes and parliamentary issues. Chapter two goes on to build upon and specify these connections in greater detail and chapter three links parliamentary literature back to crisis management. At this stage, all that is required in relation to these broad commonalities is to make the case that: a) crisis management is inherently political in nature and; b) that certain crisis concepts can be loosely linked (at this point) to the study of representative systems and assemblies.

First, international relations approaches discuss crises in terms of system stability, critical decision making and critical junctures in paths of policy linearity. Each of these concepts will be developed further in chapter two and then linked specifically to the representative assembly in chapter three. It will be argued there that stability and resilience can be connected to parliamentary analysis through the legitimacy of a political system; that certain representative functions may be able to influence aspects of decision making during crises; and, that pre-existing democratic principles and procedures shape the direction of new policies induced by crises.

Second, sociological approaches stress the man-made nature of crises and the idea that crises extend over large time-frames and involve many antecedent decisions. These ideas are important because if crises are all man-made the political stakes surrounding prevention and management rise considerably because it means that blame must always be allocated. This is one reason for the increasingly politicised nature of crisis management, which encourages analyses of politically orientated institutions to compliment the abundance of approaches

that focus on operational issues. The politicised nature of crisis management and the increasingly blurred distinction between the political and the operational dimensions of a crisis response suggest that parliaments may have a role to play in processes of crisis management. Sociological and modern crisis perspectives also indicate how acute crisis responses and the construction of crisis 'realities' are shaped by more actors, organisations and systems outside of government than was previously considered to be the case. Crisis management is not simply an executive orientated process. This means that a number of organisations, which hitherto have not been considered relevant to crisis management perspectives, are today worthy of more rigorous forms of analysis.

A final broad connection can be made between political systems or state structure and crisis causation. If complex systems are prone to incubate or escalate crises then there is a possibility that aspects of the UK's political system might affect the frequency and nature of the crises we experience. Marxist theories support this supposition. Indeed the state is often their primary unit of analysis in this sense. What will be built upon, however, in later chapters is the idea that crises can be incubated or escalated within many different levels of the political system.

Contemporary crisis management approaches obviously provide the greatest number of links to representative institutions because of their political orientation. The suggestion can be made at this point that those who research modern crisis management and those who research representative assemblies are often examining the same themes from different angles. The discussions of power, authority, legitimacy, conflict, and symbolic forms of communication noted above are as much the concern of parliamentary analysis as they are crisis research. Two clear arguments emerged from this connection. First, representative assemblies may be important to crisis management because of their ability to affect

legitimacy dynamics. Second, following on from the above, one way in which this could occur is through parliamentary involvement in symbolic forms of communication. These arguments form one element of the thesis's analytical framework through the hypothesis that:

- Representative assemblies, as producers of 'symbolic output', can influence the politics of crisis management. This influence is based upon the connection between symbolic outputs and the legitimacy of specific organisations involved in a crisis episode.

Legitimacy is the common currency of contemporary crises and parliamentary studies. As a concept, therefore, it will be repeatedly returned to in order to bind parliaments and crisis management together into an analytical framework, capable of structuring the research which follows. That these two branches of research have not been connected explicitly before should be understood as a symptom of the relatively new status of crisis management within social science, rather than an indication that the two paradigms are worlds apart. Indeed, across the following two chapters, the argument that parliamentary analysis provides an effective lens to research fundamental crisis management themes will be developed further.

Chapter Two

Developing Connections in Greater Detail: Crisis Management Stages and Representative Assemblies

Introduction

In chapter one, a specific connection was made between representative assemblies and crisis management. In a broader sense, it was also argued that crisis management can be a very political process; that certain research perspectives could be used to connect the study of representative assemblies and crisis management together; and, that certain crisis management and parliamentary scholars ‘talk the same language’ yet never address each other directly. This chapter seeks to develop these connections in finer detail by linking a series of analytical themes that apply to the ‘stages’ of crisis management to the study of representation.

Crisis management literature still remains inherently ill-structured because of the scattered, uncoordinated and often outmoded nature of many research efforts (Mitroff *et al.* 2004: 175). As crises have no respect for academic fiefdoms, it is natural to expect a number of social science disciplines to study them. Chapter one confirmed this and outlined the dominant perspectives that have been applied to understanding crisis management. Problems for commentators and practitioners arise, nevertheless, not because a lack of effort has been applied to understanding crises, but because the field has been extremely unorganised. Moves towards harmonising the different strands of crisis research have been ongoing for a number of years but it is still too early to talk of what Haas (1992) defined as an international epistemic community (Stern and Sundelius 2002: 85). Historically, the most productive branches of crisis research have tended to talk past one another (Quarantelli 1998); many researchers are not even aware that they operate in the field of crisis management (Boin 2004); and, a constellation of disparate ‘one off’ studies have never been

considered coherently, much less as part of one area of study.

Despite these difficulties, clear thematic threads run through crisis management literature. A more detailed discussion of these themes is presented in this chapter. Crisis studies from all the disciplines noted in chapter one are integrated here by appraising recurrent analytical topics relating to the specific 'stages' of crisis management. As was noted during the discussion of disaster sociology in the previous chapter, a 'stagist or phase model approach' is a frequently used tool in crisis management research. This is because of the model's comfortable fit with case study methodology, which is a common feature in the majority of crisis research. It is therefore the largest interdisciplinary theme in itself, although more thematic case studies are growing in popularity (for example, Stern and Sundelius 2002; Newlove *et al.* 2003). The process model divides the anatomy of a crisis into a series of artificial stages, which tend to number anywhere between three or seven depending on the subtlety of the model and the discipline of the researcher (compare, for example, Rosenthal *et al.* 1989: 14; Sakamoto 2001: 559; Boin 2004: 168). Political scientists tend to add stages at the end of the acute event, emphasising the political 'crisis after the crisis' (Rosenthal 2003: 132) while rational hazards literature tends to use a four stage model that focuses on pre-crisis vulnerability, prevention and preparedness (Comfort 1988). The UK government's current crisis management framework, integrated around a concept of resilience, has six stages, beginning with 'anticipation' and ending in 'recovery management' (Cabinet Office 2005: 8). In its most basic form, however, the model can be conflated into three stages (Boin 2004: 168); pre-crisis preparation; acute response; and recovery. These stages structure this thematic review.

2.1 Pre-Crisis Themes

Research relating to the pre-crisis stage tends to focus on two interlinked analytical themes,

causation and preparedness. The sections below discuss a range of crisis management studies relating to these themes. Research of this nature either refers to parliaments and parliamentary systems directly or provides an opportunity for novel hypotheses to be made about the possibilities of parliamentary involvement in the pre-crisis stage.

The Role of the State: Causation and Escalation

Chapter one discussed how economic-structural theorists claim that developed states, when caught between the logics of capitalist accumulation and popular legitimation, cause crises. This argument has been made elsewhere within the crisis management field at a more empirical level. For example, at least two 'one off' studies, from political science authors who appear to be largely unaware of the crisis management paradigm, have explicitly contended that the constitutional characteristics of the British state create public policy disasters and crises (Dunleavy 1995; Smith and Young 1996). Five features of the British political system in the 1990s were attributed to the causation of public policy disasters by Dunleavy (1995: 59): 1) the aggregate scale and unitary form of the UK political system; 2) overly speedy legislation and policy-making; 3) political hyper-activism; 4) the 'arrogance' of Whitehall; 5) ineffective accountability mechanisms. Dunleavy also contended that a lack of regional government, intense centralised policy systems, a shortage of mixed economy in provision, and a lack of consultation (all factors of 'scale aggregation') cause disasters. The accusation that problems in government accountability facilitate crises clearly brings us into parliamentary territory; however, Dunleavy's arguments contain a number of weaknesses, which cast doubt over his claim that shortcomings in the doctrine of ministerial responsibility explain policy disasters. A loose definition of a public policy disaster; an erroneous and ethnocentric view that the UK is unique in its high frequency of policy failures; and, a failure to acknowledge any crisis research that went before him cast a critical shadow over Dunleavy's work (all of which have been dealt with admirably by Gray 1996).

Moreover, some of his arguments have not aged well in the new constitutional fabric of the United Kingdom. If accurate, we would expect to see the number of policy failures reduce as the UK executive's authority has dissipated towards Europe, the devolved regions and a diffuse economy of policy providers. However, these changes, which have meant the fruition of the prescriptive remedy Dunleavy actually proposed, have not accompanied a reduction in policy 'disasters'.

Working from a similarly subjective definition of crises, Smith and Young (1996) also argue that the inadequacy of the UK constitution causes policy failure and political crises. They point to the growing diversity and fragmentation of the state (rather than the unitary aggregation that Dunleavy blamed) to contend that crises are caused because the constitution cannot change with enough pace to regulate modern political and administrative realities. Their argument, that fewer crises will occur if the constitution is reformed root and branch into a more presidential system, is weakened, like Dunleavy's, because of its ethnocentricity and failure to acknowledge historical crisis research. To argue that constitutional change will mean 'the system will return to one where crises are sporadic and relatively self contained' (Smith and Young 1996: 11) ignores conventional wisdom about the inevitability of certain crises, sidesteps the issue of public perceptions creating crisis, ignores causal forces of modernity (see below) and offers little evidence that 'better' constitutional systems have fewer crises. It also suggests that at one time a more 'effective' UK constitutional system meant less disruption, which is historically inaccurate. Despite these drawbacks, the connection drawn by these authors between UK constitutional and administrative arrangements and the causes of crisis is clearly important to this thesis. If we ignore the specific flaws within these works, their basic premise - that the characteristics of the UK's political system can cause crises - can be built upon.

Charles Perrow's Normal Accident Theory (NAT), which has been extremely influential within the crisis management field (see Rijpma 1997) provides another dimension to this exercise. Perrow claims that accidents - the precursors of bigger crises - are inevitable because the structure of developed societies creates systems that are 'coupled tightly' and 'interactively complex' (Perrow 1999: 4-5). Complex systems, regardless of type, create unexpected interactions between independent failures. Interactive complexity therefore involves:

Two or more failures among components that interact in some way. No one dreamed that when X failed, Y would be out of order and the two failures would interact so as to both start a fire and silence the fire alarm. Furthermore, no one can figure out the interaction at the time and thus no one knows what to do ... Next time they will put in an extra alarm system and a fire suppressor, but who knows, that might just allow three more unexpected interactions among inevitable failures. This interacting tendency is a characteristic of a system. (Perrow 1999: 4)

In some systems interactive complexity accidents will be contained easily. However, if a system is 'tightly coupled', meaning that the problem cannot be isolated from other interdependent parts of the system, the emergency will escalate quickly (Perrow 1999: 4). These two systemic characteristics - complex interaction and tight coupling - mean that well developed systems can be 'error inducers' that create a certain kind of *inevitable* crisis (Perrow: 1999: 3). Normal Accident Theory can be linked to the argument that the state can facilitate crises, precisely because contemporary UK political and policy systems are interactively complex and constituted through a myriad of constitutive elements which are coupled together interdependently. The coupling element of Normal Accident Theory can be seen in the continued pursuit of 'joined-up' government, which has been a goal of British governments throughout the 20th century (see Flinders 2002b:57; Ling 2002: 639) and of New Labour in particular since 1997 (Cm 4310 1999: 16; Richards and Smith 2004: 107-111;). The complexity dimension, meanwhile, can be seen through the descriptions of the state attached to the popular concept of 'governance', which detail the continued expansion

of forms of policy-making and administration outside of the core executive (see, for example, the definitions of Richards and Smith 2002: 2; Bevir and Rhodes 2003: 6). The idea that complex bureaucratic systems can facilitate crises has also been supported elsewhere within the crisis management field.

Barry Turner's first publication, *Man-made Disasters* (1978), was one of the first to demonstrate how technical, social, institutional and administrative arrangements can combine to produce disaster. This research stressed that socio-technical disruptions not only had pre-conditions, but, more importantly, those pre-conditions had a common characteristic; namely, long incubation periods studded with unheeded or misinterpreted early warning signs. Thus, Turner's lasting contribution was to challenge conceptions of crises as sudden cataclysmic events and offer an alternative approach which recognises a long pre-crisis gestation period. More important to this thesis, however is the fact that, 'Turner has taught us [that] the rationally organized bureaucracy - that prominent feature of modern society - can quite efficiently translate human errors into crisis outcomes' (Boin 2004: 169).

The Role of the State: Vulnerability

The notion of man-made crisis incubation is closely linked to the concept of vulnerability. Vulnerability developed as a concept predominantly in the disaster paradigm under the influence of geographers (see Timmerman 1981) but it is now entrenched across disciplines (Weichselgartner 2001: 87). Vulnerability studies examine economic capabilities, political and social power structures, and historical and structural class patterns as they intersect with geographical issues. The common feature of this research is its objective of tracing 'a progression that connects the impact of a hazard on people through a series of levels of social factors that generate vulnerability' (Blaikie *et al.* 1994: 22). For example, Blaikie *et*

al's. (1994: 23) Pressure Release Model is designed to determine causation by tracing compounds of hazard and vulnerability (which together create risk). These authors trace vulnerability from economic, demographic, or political “root causes” which tend to reflect the allocation and distribution of resources (and therefore the distribution of power) and also the functioning (or not) of the state. Root causes are translated by “dynamic pressures” such as social movements, disease and war, famine or international debt. These translations then create “unsafe conditions”. The authors of the Pressure Release Model argue that ‘it is imperative to accept that vulnerability involves something very different from simply dealing with hazards through mitigation, prediction, relief ... research and policy must account for the connections in society that cause vulnerability as well as the hazards themselves’ (Blaikie *et al.* 1994: 30). These kinds of contribution compliment the argument - already extrapolated from economic-structural political science and ‘normal accident’ scholars - that the political system could constitute a root cause or a translating dynamic pressure.

The growth in socio-cultural *perceptions of* vulnerability has been the subject of political crisis research (Beck 1992; Boin and ‘tHart 2003; Boin 2004). Beck’s (1992) theoretical treatise on the risks of modernity, for example, has had a substantial influence on crisis management thinking. At the heart of Beck’s argument is the notion that western states have developed into ‘risk societies’ where concerns about vulnerability have become *the* social and political priority. The growth in social unease is unsurprising given the proliferation of new and un-quantifiable threats that have resulted from forces of modernity. International terrorism, global pandemics, technological disruptions, weaknesses in infrastructure and the chronic ecological crisis, for example, all combine to assault any sense of security felt by citizens. However, developed societies now perceive the efficient and relative perfection of private and public service delivery as normal. This means that small interferences or

disturbances to a system easily assume critical proportions in the eyes of the public. Moreover, as preventative schemes and safety measures increase in sophistication and effectiveness, the effects of small scale disturbances become, particularly in the eyes of the mass 'mediatised' public, increasingly dramatic (Boin 2004: 170). This situation has been referred to as a 'vulnerability paradox' by crisis authors (Rosenthal *et al.* 2001; Rosenthal 2003) because the more effective that a society becomes at managing disorder, the greater the likelihood that disruption of any sort will be viewed as a crisis. The vulnerability paradox has a number of political implications for crisis management authorities (Boin and 'tHart 2003: 546). First, it may be one reason behind a widespread sense that western societies are experiencing more crises than ever before. The frequency of crises when defined through objective criteria, therefore, can be distinguished from the (higher) frequency with which the label "crisis" is allocated to issues, which in previous decades would not have attracted such attention (Rosenthal 2003: 132). Second, for the crisis manager the growing sense of vulnerability can be problematic. If minor disruptions easily attract dramatic media interpretation or insecure citizens continually construe small-scale problems as symptoms of a larger crisis, then the prevention of crises becomes impossible and crisis management becomes an exercise in controlling public perceptions rather than objective threats. Third, alongside the growth in public perceptions of man-made vulnerability, we can also see an increased willingness to hold authorities culpable for crisis causation. Citizens expect the state to safeguard them. The erosion of public trust in the capability of the state to perform this function, caused in part by a perception that more crises are occurring, combined with an increasingly tenacious and assertive mass media, has raised the political stakes surrounding crisis prevention considerably. The vulnerability paradox perspectives are important because they entrench the argument, raised in chapter one, that the legitimacy of governmental organisations will fluctuate in accordance with a perceived ability to prevent or mitigate crises. Today, more so than ever before, those in

charge of preparedness policy are exposed to intense scrutiny and a public willingness to allocate blame in the event of a crisis.

Institutional Crises within Government

Certain crisis management scholars use the nexus between a policy sector and its environment as a unit of analysis when examining the cause, escalation and impact of 'institutional crises' (Boin and 'tHart 2000; Alink *et al.* 2001). Institutional crises pertain to policy sectors, which are defined broadly by these authors as, 'an institutional field of actors, rules and practices associated with state efforts to address a particular category of social issues and problems' (Boin and 'tHart 2000: 11). It must be understood, therefore, that the primary analytical concern of an institutional crisis perspective is the development and impact of crises *within* government. The analytical framework presented by these authors provides fertile ground for connecting parliaments to aspects of crisis management because legitimacy dynamics are repeatedly used to explain how crises are caused and escalated. Indeed, the definition of an institutional crisis presented by these authors states that, 'a policy sector is in crisis when its institutional structure experiences a relatively strong decline in (followed by unusually low levels of) legitimacy' (Boin and 'tHart 2000: 13). Institutional structure, according to this framework, is composed of 'hard' elements (decision-making procedures, policy instruments, service delivery features) and 'soft' elements relating to a policy's paradigm (ideas and beliefs about the appropriateness of objectives and implementation). The process of identifying whether or not an institutional crisis is about to occur brings us to the first connection to parliaments because:

The legitimacy of a policy sector is the long-term resultant of societal, political and legal support and acceptance. Legitimacy cannot be measured in absolute terms. It is possible, however, to assess and detect significant alterations in levels of legitimacy. Steep declines in a fairly short time period are telltale signs of (impending) institutional crisis. Researchers can gauge these by examining the extent and content of media coverage, *the amount and content of parliamentary attention for the sector*, and the number of administrative

appeals, court and Ombudsman rulings concerning the sector. (Boin and 'tHart 2000: 13, emphasis added)

For an institutional crisis to occur, gaps must emerge between a policy sector's performance and the perceptions of those actors and organisations through which it draws its legitimacy. Declines in legitimacy occur as support for a policy sector drops. Negative parliamentary attention, according to these authors, can provide one indication of this taking place. This does not mean, however, that parliaments are a specific cause of de-legitimisation, merely that they can indicate (and perhaps accelerate) the withdrawal of support. Using parliamentary activity to establish that declines in legitimacy are ongoing is not the same thing as stating that parliamentary activity caused such a process in the first place. However, there may also be some connections between legislatures, as part of the larger political environment, and the causation and escalation of these kinds of crisis.

Institutionalisation within a policy sector, according to these authors, can be measured in terms of degrees of conservatism and dynamism:

In a highly institutionalized sector, the main organizational practices and policy orientations have been in place for a considerable period of time. Everybody knows what the sector does, how it is done and why it is done that way. Correspondingly, a low degree of insitutionalization indicates that the sector harbors a significant level of uncertainty and ambiguity about the nature of desirable policies and mixes of policy instruments. What the sector does and why it happens that way is the subject of continued discussion, ad-hoc decision making and fragmented sense-making processes. ... A higher degree of institutionalization does not necessarily correspond with higher performance, however. The optimal degree of insitutionalization varies with the main tasks of the sector and the nature of the environment in which these are to be performed. (Boin and 'tHart 2000:14)

Stable policy sectors are those that can find a balance between retaining their integrity and being responsive; a state of affairs defined as 'dynamic conservatism'. Sectors which are imbalanced one way or another, according to institutional crisis theorists, 'carry the seeds of crisis' (Boin and 'tHart 2000: 14), because too much inertia means that a sector may be

unable to detect and respond to challenges, while too much dynamism may mean:

Unstable coalitions, constant ad-hocracy and a lack of professional self-confidence by officials working in the sector. Everything flows, controversies abound, and there is not even a minimal set of shared beliefs guiding the policy agenda and problem solving strategies. Trial and error become the order of the day; policymaking is exclusively reactive, and driven by incidents, mistakes and scandal ... overly responsive policy sectors are constantly in the grip of conflicts over their *raison d'être*, and are characterized by a sense of insecurity. (Boin and 'tHart 2000: 15)

Two vulnerability enhancing conditions can unbalance policy sectors. First, environmental changes must challenge the institutional structure by creating a shift in demands and expectations. Second, internal deficiencies prevent the sector from adequately detecting or responding to environmental challenges. The first vulnerability enhancing condition - environmental changes which affect perceptions of demands and performance - allows another connection to be drawn between parliaments and institutional crisis because, as Boin and 'tHart (2000: 16) state:

Politics is another domain of [environmental] change. Policy sectors depend on political legislatures for their resources. Changes in the composition of the political arena or in the political currency of ideas may have profound effects on the sector. ... When long-standing conceptions of proper policy aims and policy means are replaced by a new paradigm, a policy sector is suddenly perceived as ineffective, conservative and in need of reform.

The connection between parliaments and crisis, which is only alluded to briefly in this research, links legislatures and vulnerabilities within policy sectors. As important as this connection could be, it must also be stressed that it is both tenuous and unlikely in a UK context. These authors refer to legislatures in passing, in a way that is meant to illuminate a broader argument about shifts in political ideas and beliefs. Moreover, UK parliaments have very little influence over government resources. It must also be kept in mind that vulnerabilities will only develop within policy sectors through a compound of environmental changes combining with internal deficiencies in the organisations, actors or

policies which have to respond to the emerging challenges. Thus we can see that a parliament could only be one small element in a far larger process of causation. Nevertheless, parliaments, as one element within the political domain, may have some influence over changes in political attention cycles, the currency of policy ideas, or the perceptions of specific publics with an interest in the policy sector.

A more likely potential connection can also be traced between institutional crises and parliaments. For a crisis to occur additional factors must escalate underlying vulnerabilities into crisis outcomes. Three specific examples of what Blaikie *et al.* (1994: 23) first called “dynamic pressures” are given by these authors. First, a focusing event that, ‘channels and amplifies latent feelings of discontent, suspicion or outrage with regard to the performance of the sector’ (Boin and ‘tHart 2000: 20). Second, specific policy failures which are perceived as blameworthy. Performance deficits that are seen as a result of identifiable and avoidable errors, for example, could lead to a withdrawal of support. Finally, political interventions can translate vulnerabilities into policy crises. Crucially, one, ‘force in this process of politicization is the mobilization of organized opposition which successfully frames focusing events as indicators of endemic policy failures ... this type of politicization and imposed reform has little to do with the substantive problems of the sector. It becomes dominated by the logic of political blame avoidance and survival rather than by improvement of sectoral performance’ (Boin and ‘tHart 2000: 20). Institutional crisis perspectives therefore support the argument presented in chapter one that legislatures can play a role in framing or other symbolic aspects of crisis politics. This connection seems stronger than the last. It is far more likely that parliaments will be a venue for political interventions seeking to allocate blame, politicise policy problems and escalate pre-existing issues into crises than actually creating the causes of crises in the first instance. As such, parliaments and parliamentarians could be one independent variable that escalates policy

problems into institutional crises.

The Role of the State: Risk Management

Studies of public sector risk do not explicitly refer to crisis management, but issues of risk obviously have a close link to causation and preparedness. There is a huge amount of literature on the subject of risk and risk management. This section only summarises a representative sample of literature that deals with the relationship between risk, politics and democracy (Stern 1991; Beck 1992; Hood *et al.* 2001; Weale 2002). The consistent theme in the arguments of these commentators revolves around the inadequacies of the 'traditional' system of risk regulation. Analysis of these inadequacies allows connections to be drawn between parliaments and pre-crisis policymaking.

Within both academic and official literature there is a recognition that the public has to be more actively involved in all stages of risk communication and regulation (Stern 1991; Beck 1992; Weale 2002). Officially, for example, the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (Cm 4053: 1998) and the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee (HL 38: 2000) have both highlighted how the manner in which standards for environmental risk are set is insufficiently attentive to public opinion. Academically, Albert Weale (2002: 6), and others such as Hood *et al.* (2001), for example, point out that questions are being raised internationally as to whether traditional forms of risk policy making are consistent with democratically orientated expectations. Weale argues that risk regulation has been built upon a compound of: a) an utilitarian public service philosophy that is insular and rational in nature, and; b) an elitist system of representation that, to a large extent, excludes popular opinion between elections (Weale 2002: 7). As far as Weale (2002: 124) is concerned, democratic elitism and utilitarianism are incompatible with the needs of modern day risk regulation (i.e. inclusive decision making and deliberative communication).

Weale uses the contributions of various authors as a platform to propose three areas of reform that he claims should underpin moves to enhance risk regulation: 1) greater democratic legitimacy, defined as responsive, representative and responsible government; 2) improved scientific integrity; 3) a greater acknowledgment of the internationalisation of risk (Weale 2002: 125). The first area is the sole concern of this thesis as it takes us into parliamentary territory. In particular, Weale advocates that the legitimacy of risk regulation could be strengthened by focusing on three areas: 1) improving policy responsiveness to public opinion; 2) widening representative channels to increase the numbers involved in decision making, and; 3) enhancing responsibility within government by improving internal policy deliberations, external policy communications, and ensuring trustworthy and prudent decision making. The first two principles - responsiveness and representation - are particularly important to this thesis because they introduce the argument, presented by Weale and others (see Stern 1991, for example), that the strengthening of consultative processes and the widening of representative channels can improve the legitimacy (and therefore effectiveness) of risk regulation. Making risk policy more responsive to public opinion and increasing the number of voices within decision making should help challenge the current model of regulation which is characterised by an over reliance on 'rational' scientific advice and perceived as hegemonic, undemocratic and ignorant of the value driven nature of risk choice (Stern 1991; Weale 2002). In sum, risk choices have to be linked more closely to the articulation of public opinion and this requires political mechanisms that connect the public to those executive processes which currently define risk problems and policy solutions.

National parliaments are clearly one such mechanism. However, Weale's (2002: 127) proposals for enhancing the representative and responsive character of risk policy revolve around non-parliamentary instruments. When decisions involve principles which are

“deontological”, “absolute” and a public consensus exists over their importance (genetic modification, human cloning, sea pollution are all given as examples) then non-parliamentary mechanisms could be used more often ‘to give decision makers a sense of where the balance of opinion lies’ (Weale 2002: 127). Greater public involvement must also be incorporated into decisions which are value laden or ethical in nature. The requirements of representation in this sense can be met ‘by extending and refining the various forms of public consultation that are now available, including deliberative polls, citizens juries, consensus conferences as well as the more traditional methods of consultation’ (Weale 2002: 129). In relegating the importance of Parliament in this sense one major problem arises that Weale does not address. Strengthening non-parliamentary mechanisms preferences responsive and representative government above responsible government - Weale’s third reform proposal - by weakening accountability requirements. A more responsible government, according to Weale, should be honest, open, trustworthy, prudent and take care to deliberate properly about risk. Placing greater emphasis on non-parliamentary mechanisms, which cannot enforce anything other than “explanatory” accountability (Woodhouse 1994: 29-30), could also weaken a parliament’s ability to ensure that government behaves responsibly. This problem is accentuated by the fact that within UK parliaments accountability mechanisms are entwined with representative and consultative mechanisms (for example, a parliamentary debate can perform accountability, representative and consultative roles simultaneously). If the deliberative competences of Parliament are weakened further, its ability to scrutinise and hold the executive accountable will also diminish. The problem of ensuring responsible government, and therefore ensuring democratic legitimacy in risk regulation, would remain unresolved regardless of Weale’s agenda, as neither parliament nor the non-parliamentary mechanisms that he advocates would be able to hold governments to account properly.

Another relevant thematic thread throughout this kind of risk literature is the need to redress the 'rational-scientific' model of risk communication with a greater emphasis on *real politik* variables (Stern 1991; Owens 2000). Those involved in risk communication, it is argued, must move away from the pretence of delivering neutral scientific advice to apolitical altruistic decision makers. The dominant approach, described by Owens (2000: 1142) as the 'information deficit' model, assumes that information can be transmitted in a neutral objective manner and that the public are ignorant, yet natural science is unquestionable. Owens, however, contends that the problem for risk communication is not institutionalised public ignorance but institutionalised public distrust in institutions. Stern (1991: 99) also points to problems in traditional risk communication systems. In his view the scientific model fails to appreciate fully that technological debates are embedded in a democratic system. Democratic principles, according to Stern, are inconsistent with a view that would give scientists or any other group the right to determine how citizens should perceive their policy choices (Stern 1999: 99). The communication of risk, therefore, must be seen in the light of democratic politics. Moreover, Stern maintains that the scientific model fails to realise that knowledge can be politically problematic and that risks to human life and health are not the only important issue in technological risk debates. In general the current system fails to recognise the 'who gets what, when and how' elements attached to scientific communications and mistakenly portrays risk communication as information transfer between experts and non-experts rather than as a type of political discourse. These studies assert that the goal of risk communication is to promote an improved discourse ultimately leading to well-informed democratic choices through political and/or institutional structures. This would appear to be another area where national parliaments could play a role. However, like Weale, these authors also argue that legislatures are incapable of democratising risk communication (for example, see Stern 1991: 102; Owens 2000: 1143).

Risk literature also indicates that preparedness policies will have some form of relationship

with the parliamentary system of government which envelops them. Christopher Hood *et al.* (2001), when attempting to explain the differentiated regulatory regimes that make up the British risk 'archipelago' continue a debate familiar to any student of organisational or institutional life. They attempt to determine whether a regulatory regime's context (defined as interests, public opinion, market pressures) shape its content (size, style, structure, policy) or whether an institution's "organisational membrane" shapes the external environment to such an extent that it must be considered the strongest variable on policy output. This is familiar territory for Hood (see also Lodge and Hood 2002). His conclusion that both context and content shape each other is also unsurprising but the argument that context variables are the more 'robust explainers' of risk regimes suggests a link between parliaments and the empirical dimensions of risk policy. If political context explains the nature of risk regimes, then the parliamentary system surrounding these regimes must be one variable affecting the mechanics of pre-crisis risk policy.

Connecting Pre-Crisis Themes and Representative Institutions

In what ways are the analytical themes noted above connected to the study of parliaments? First, crisis research continually provides evidence which can be used to argue that political and bureaucratic systems could have the potential to cause or escalate crises. Political science analyses (Dunleavy 1995; Smith and Young 1996), systemic causation theories (Turner and Pidgeon 1997; Perrow 1999); vulnerability research (Blaikie *et al.* 1994); and institutional crisis theory (Boin and 'tHart 2000; Alink *et al.* 2001) add new dimensions to the argument presented in chapter one that the parliamentary system, and perhaps parliaments themselves, may contribute to the cause or escalate crises. Research into institutional crises in particular highlights the most explicit theoretical links between parliaments and the pre-crisis stage. The fact that parliaments can be one indicator of an impending institutional crisis means that they could be used to 'horizon-scan' for emerging

institutional crises within policy sectors. Moreover, the framework set out by those authors also suggests that parliaments could potentially be one variable (amongst many) that causes an institutional crisis in the first instance. This is unlikely but even if parliaments are unconnected to the original causes of a policy sector's problems, there remains a greater likelihood that they can act as an 'escalating' mechanism through which small-scale policy problems are politicised into larger de-legitimising institutional crises. In these situations, parliaments, instead of identifying and helping to ameliorate problems, would entrench the sense of crises surrounding policy sectors. This connection reinforces the arguments presented in chapter one that parliaments could affect public perceptions (and therefore legitimacy dynamics) surrounding those authorities involved in a crisis episode. Moreover, the context of the 'risk society' within which crisis management authorities now have to operate means that it is inevitable that fluctuations in legitimacy and support will occur as a consequence of the arrival of a crisis. Risk literature also indicates how political environment shapes bureaucratic regulatory regimes (Hood *et al.* 2001). This provides weight to the assertion that the parliamentary framework can affect preparedness policy. Scholars who document pathologies within risk regulation also shed light on this connection by showing that the nature and quality of risk policy is affected by democratic processes of representation, deliberation and legitimation. These risk orientated arguments place pre-crisis policy squarely within the boundaries of parliamentary analysis by suggesting a clear relationship between facets of liberal democracy and crisis management.

Ultimately, what the discussion above illuminates is that any understanding of the pre-crisis stage must acknowledge that pre-crisis planning, 'can no longer be dominated by engineers and other technical specialists; it is evolving into a time-consuming yet potentially instructive exercise in participative, deliberative democracy that goes right to the political centre' (tHart and Boin. 2001: 182).

2.2 Acute-Stage Themes

Crisis research relating to this stage tends to focus on the structure, characteristics or pathological tendencies of decision making.

Decision Making Authority

The centralisation of decision making authority during a crisis has been an issue that has consistently attracted attention within the European literature (Rosenthal *et al.* 1989; Kouzmin *et al.* 1995; Rosenthal *et al.* 2001; Boin 2004; Boin *et al.* 2005). The long-standing view has been that in times of crisis, decision making is likely to gravitate towards a small cabal of central personnel because a sense of urgency, uncertainty and stress make consultation difficult (Rosenthal *et al.* 1989). The 'centralisation argument' grew out of the international relations paradigm to become 'a cornerstone of theories of, and administrative frameworks for, crisis management' (Kouzmin *et al.* 1995: 25). More recent studies, however, have shown that although there is a trend towards centralisation in certain situations, the reality of crisis decision making can be far more complex (tHart and Boin 2001; Rosenthal *et al.* 2001; Boin *et al.* 2005). The re-appraisal of the centralisation thesis has emerged from more sophisticated understandings of crisis policy making which are more empirically grounded. In particular, the reappraisal has developed out of the increasing awareness of the interaction between operational and political crisis management (Albaek *et al.* 2001); the realisation, generated within organisational theory, that uncertainty means adhocracy rather than predictable bureaucratic norms (Haas *et al.* 1977; Inbar 1979; Bronner 1982); and, studies of public administration and governance which describe the 'hollowing' and 'spreading' of state competences and authority into new models of governance (Hood 1991; Pollitt 1993; Richards and Smith 2002). Others working from within the organisational perspective, such as Booth (1993) and Mitroff (1988), have provided evidence which suggests that response structures are influenced by the 'trigger event'. Sudden

triggers are likely to provoke reliance on the known and trusted (centralisation); so called 'creeping crises' such as global warming and ozone depletion, can attract bureaucratic multi-layered responses; while periodic crises that habitually enter Issue Attention Cycles (Downs 1972) tend to attract negotiated responses which attach new agencies and policy onto existing apparatus, created during the issue's entry into previous cycles. Other studies have shown how formal structures and official decision making guidelines quickly evaporate during a crisis only to be replaced with informal decision making lines that reflect power, institutional realities or 'the dominance of situation' as a shaper of decision making involvement (Hart and Boin 2001; Rosenthal and Kouzmin 1997; Dombrowsky 1998). By applying their own expertise to crisis decision making, 'thick' description and tentative theoretical perspectives now exist in relation to crisis decisions and democratic systems (Jackson 1976; Finn 1991; Brecher and Wilkenfield 1997); policy sectors and government structure (Rosenthal and Kouzmin 1997; Dror 2001); and the structure and output of political crisis coalitions (Ahrari 1987). In short, serious doubt now exists about the widespread notion that the main pattern of crisis management can be described as mono-centric.

It is recognised in some fields that crisis management networks can be more effective when decentralised and polycentric (de Vroom 2001: 530; Rosenthal *et al.* 2001: 14; Boin *et al.* 2005: 54). Crisis scholars highlight how crucial decisions are not taken by exclusive groups during crises but instead emerge as a product of numerous actors, one of which could conceivably be a legislature:

The importance of top-level policy makers in crisis response operations is easily overstated. Public leaders do, of course, make highly consequential decisions during a crisis, but so do other officials and pivotal people outside of government ... *In most crises, the key tenets of crisis responses are shaped by many more players within the government system.* Our core claim is that successful crisis management depends not so much on critical decision-making but on the facilitation of crisis implementation and coordination throughout the response network. (Boin *et al.* 2005: 47, emphasis added)

Part of the reason for this claim relates to a perceived need to legitimise crisis policy in the eyes of all of those involved in diverse crisis responses (de Vroom 2001). Centralised responses are now seen by many as a problem, particularly where large inter-organisational settings are in operation, because not all responders 'buy in' to exclusively formulated policies from the centre. Opening up decision making to larger policy networks can increase legitimacy, participation and co-operation between organisations involved in formulating and implementing response stages (de Vroom 2001: 529). Thus, 'officials should be asking more than telling, requesting rather than ordering, delegating and decentralising rather than narrowing and centralizing at the height of the emergency' (Quarantelli 1998: 274). Paradoxically, however, large 'horizontal' policy networks containing non-state actors can run into problems during implementation stages because they may not be seen as legitimate by those affected by their policies, particularly if the crisis response requires authoritative or coercive action. In these situations, 'a vertical (hierarchical or authoritative) mode of coordination might be a functional or even a necessary complementary mechanism' (de Vroom 2001: 530). By involving more groups in an internal deliberative process, the decisions made may receive more support from those involved in their formulation and implementation but, somewhat ironically, the same decisions may suffer because they may not be viewed as democratically legitimate by the people affected. Moving the decision making process away from democratic institutions to expert networks increases the likelihood that crisis decisions will be seen as illegitimate by those affected, precisely because they have been removed from the framework of the state. In many ways, this argument will be familiar to those who study legitimacy at the European Union level where a debate is still ongoing in relation to the concept of input (via democratic institutions) versus (policy) output legitimacy (see for example, Meunier 2003; Papadopoulos 2003; Skogstad 2003). De Vroom's argument, however, derived from his analysis of HIV in the blood donor supply, is extremely important to this thesis because it suggests that regime legitimacy may

be essential for the implementation of contentious crisis policies where compliance, co-operation or order must be enforced. In this kind of context, state authorities are more likely to be effective precisely because of their legitimate and approved status - a status awarded by their place within a representative framework which connects crisis policies to affected citizens.

Leadership and Legitimacy

Crises are occasions for leadership. Citizens expect state authorities and the incumbents of powerful offices to lead during crises. An important strand of crisis research examines the interaction between leadership decisions and legitimacy dynamics (Jackson 1976; Hansen and Stern 2001; Rosenthal *et al.* 2001; Boin *et al.* 2005). Dan Hansen and Erik Stern's (2001) argument that there is an iterative relationship between decision making and legitimacy across crisis stages is particularly relevant. These authors contend that this relationship has profound effects over the quality of crisis management actions and over the way in which those actions are judged. According to this research, the relationship between decision making and legitimacy:

has the potential to create positive or negative spirals of decision making, communication and credibility. A hostile climate (one in which actors credibility has been seriously compromised in the eyes of the media, the political elite, or the public) may negatively affect decision-making processes and increase the likelihood of stress-related performance decrements. At the same time, problematic decisions, outcomes, or communications ... may lead to further credibility losses and heightened hostility in the public arena. (Hansen and Stern 2001: 179)

This relationship can be seen across crisis stages. Inadequacies in decision making performance at one stage of a crisis can lead to drains in the credibility and legitimacy of actors, which, in turn, can mean ineffective policy at other stages (Hansen and Stern 2001). Problems of de-legitimation can affect crisis managers before they even have a chance to

take acute stage decisions because they may be associated (rightly or wrongly) with the problems that caused the crisis in the first instance. A lack of credibility caused by this association may lead to policies lacking legitimacy and support. Ultimately, these studies indicate that the actors and authorities involved in a crisis need legitimacy and credibility to cope and manage through crises. It also seems likely that a mutually reinforcing relationship exists between the decisions made in an acute stage and the legitimacy that actors and organisations experience, not only during the operational phase but also in terms of post-event evaluation and reform (Hansen and Stern 2001: 179; Rosenthal *et al.* 1991). Rosenthal *et al.* (2001: 14) summarise the difficulties that crisis managers face in this respect:

Public authorities get caught between their limited abilities to provide effective crisis management and the increased willingness on the part of the public to scrutinize governmental actions and assign blame when deemed necessary. During crises, a critical attitude towards government will rapidly translate into a decline in legitimacy. This loss of support not only pertains to what the public authorities have done during the crisis but will also affect the diminishing returns on the part of public authorities with regard to the prevention of future crises. The public role in the crisis arena then becomes part of a vicious circle. (Rosenthal *et al.* 2001: 14)

Hansen and Stern (2001: 179) advocate the pursuit of a research agenda that explores the ‘profound consequences’ of the legitimacy-decision making relationship across the crisis management stages. Moreover, in this emerging agenda ‘the micro level of analysis must be set in relation to meso-and macro-level structures and processes which undermine, sustain or increase the legitimacy of political administrative institutions’ (Hansen and Stern 2001: 179).

Arguments about the correlation between leadership and legitimacy clearly reinforce the claim that legitimacy dynamics are central to an understanding of contemporary crisis management. The findings of this thesis, however, will determine the role of the representative assembly as a factor that ‘undermines, sustains or increases’ legitimacy during crises and, subsequently, its usefulness as a lens capable of examining legitimacy dynamics

across micro, meso and macro levels of analysis.

Conflict and the Advancement of Demands

The study of inter-actor and inter-organisational conflict is another strong theme running throughout decision making research. Crises can generate risks and opportunities for organisations and individuals. A combination of intensified blame and opportunity dynamics creates situations where 'bureau-politics' can run rife (Rosenthal *et al.* 1991). A bureau-political perspective:

draws attention to the strategic dimensions of relations within and across government organizations. It alerts analysts to the pervasiveness of interest-driven behaviour and multiple lines of conflict which exist within executive branches. In a generic sense, bureaucratic politics is characterized by the following components: (1) there are many actors in the policy making arena; (2) actors have diverging and conflicting interests; (3) no one actor has overriding influence; (4) decisions are inherently compromises; and (5) these decision outcomes tend not to anticipate the requirements for effective implementation. (Rosenthal *et al.* 1991: 215)

These characteristics sit comfortably with an empirical view of policy making during crisis episodes. Rosenthal *et al's* research highlights the political nature of operational responses to four crises (the 1986 San Salvador Earthquake; the Heysel Stadium tragedy; the Hillsborough disaster; and, the Dutch moluccan hostage takings) and suggests that conflict during crises upholds the 'public interest' (Rosenthal *et al.* 1991: 228). Inter-organisational conflict, according to these authors, should not be viewed putatively as negative. Instead, conflict can be seen to provide certain functional benefits to crisis responses. These include putting crisis agencies to the test; counteracting 'groupthink' (see below); fostering openness; and facilitating democratic control of crisis management policies. Other research, which focuses on political conflict surrounding an operational response also shows how 'it is crucial to understand that managing any crisis is not simply a technical matter of finding the optimal scientifically-based 'solution' and implementing it. It is also about politics'

(McConnell and Stark 2002: 664). A distinction can therefore be drawn between operational conflicts between responders and political conflict surrounding a response. However, contemporary crisis research teaches that operational and political spheres should not be treated in analytical isolation. To understand operational crisis episodes we have to understand the context and nature of the political landscape before, during, and after an acute crisis event. Representative assemblies are clearly part of that landscape and can, therefore, provide insights into operational and political crises.

A series of perspectives show that crises can create authoritarian or totalitarian conditions: they can, for example, provide the powerful with the justification for derogating from human rights conventions or developing more autocratic forms of government (Jackson 1976; Finn 1991; Beck 1992). Robert Jackson, for example, contended that:

The liberal model of governing may have to be adjusted to account for the type of government response in crises since the members of society usually play little, if any, role in the process ... Only in the long run and especially for recurring crises, such as floods, can the normal demands of society be accommodated as in the liberal model. The normal intermediary groups of liberal society rarely have much of a role to play in such situations. (Jackson 1976: 249)

Ulrich Beck (1992: 80) also views the development of global risks as a potential challenge to the normative elements of the liberal democratic model because the politics of risk harbour a tendency towards authoritarianism, justified through the prevention of hazards:

The political 'side effects' of civilization's 'side effects' threaten the continued existence of the democratic political system. That system is caught in the unpleasant dilemma of either failing in the face of systematically produced hazards, or suspending fundamental democratic principles through the addition of authoritarian, repressive 'buttresses'. Breaking through this alternative is among the essential tasks of democratic thought and action in the already apparent future of the "risk society". (Beck 1992: 80)

These views of crisis sit comfortably with the centralisation thesis because they suggest that

non-executive actors may be excluded from policy deliberations so that 'the job can be done'. Jackson, for example, focuses on the coercive nature of decision making in crises by reversing Theodore Lowi's classic schema of policy output. Lowi's policy classifications (distributive, redistribute, regulative and constituent) are differentiated on one axis by the application of legitimate coercion (Lowi 1972: 298-310). Governments when producing policy are meant to move from the least coercive stage (passive consultation) to the most coercive (legislation). In a crisis, however, governments are more likely to offer tokenistic or symbolic output followed immediately by a coercive policy. Only after the crisis, during the post crisis stage, will democratic processes begin (Jackson, 1976: 213-214). This form of crisis management would mean a minimal role for parliaments. However, although Jackson's conclusions remain relevant, they must be adjusted to the twenty-first century and to the new types of crisis that governments must deal with. Modern studies of crises and governance structures, for example, have suggested that strong state coercion is helpful during implementation but that exclusive state decision making is not always appropriate during the formulation of responses (de Vroom 2001). Consultative and representative mechanisms, therefore, can be seen as useful in many acute management strategies. Moreover, organisational or political conflict during a crisis can counter moves towards autocratic decision making by facilitating democratic control of crisis activities (Rosenthal *et al.* 1991). However, even if they are not advancing demands, parliaments, as explained in chapter one, may still be used for the production of symbolic outputs which give the appearance of democratic principles in action.

Decision Making Pathologies

Aside from approaches that focus on the structure and characteristics of decisions, one further strand of theory is influential in the crisis management field. The relationship between stress and behaviour in decision making has been examined extensively by

researchers in a number of settings, including political crisis episodes (Janis 1982; Weigele 1973; Hermann 1979; Keinan 1987; 'tHart 1994). Taken together, these studies report the pathological effects of high doses of stress during choice situations. The focus of these efforts relate to individuals and groups, notably group cohesiveness, leadership, and intra-group and inter-group problems. One strand of this research, relating to the notion of 'groupthink' is particularly noteworthy.

The most influential psychological research in the crisis field has emerged from Irving Janis's concept of 'groupthink' (Janis 1972; 1982: 1989; 'tHart 1994). Groupthink refers to the tendency of small cohesive decision making groups to fall prey to a form of 'collective foolishness' when placed under stress. It was originally defined by Janis as 'a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action' (Janis 1972: 9). Thus the constituent elements of groupthink incorporate a process (a way of thinking about a decision situation) as well as the characteristics of the decision group (cohesiveness, personal involvement, history). Groupthink encourages error laden decision making or, more precisely, leads to a deterioration in the quality of deliberation in a decision occasion ('tHart 1994: 11). This theory describes how, under extreme stress and uncertainty, group harmony and cohesion overrides the group's ability to assess problems, process information and take decisions. The collective and erroneous rationalisations arising from groupthink can lead to symptoms of invulnerability, overconfidence, excessive optimism, unquestionable belief in morality and a process of self-censure during decision making. Leaders within a decision making unit can often promote groupthink in an effort to create consensus from ambivalence. Alternatively, groupthink can be used as a sophisticated method of shifting authority (and therefore accountability and blame) from an individual to a group. Unanimity in decision

making from this perspective can be seen as a collective process of blame avoidance rather than an observation of resolute consensus. The process of bureau-political conflict, as noted above, can challenge these pathologies by opening up a group to new ideas and arguments.

Janis (1982) has argued that groupthink cultures caused some of the worst crises in US history, including the Bay of Pigs episode, Pearl Harbour and the escalation of war in Vietnam. The theory has also been used in explanations of contemporary policy failures and fiascos ('tHart 1994; Bovens and 'tHart 2004). Complimentary research endeavours have examined the policy advice given to crisis managers (Kouzman and Jarman 2004); the motivation and rationality of decision making (Cutting and Kouzman 1999); and presented frameworks for the analysis of group decision making dynamics during crises (Rosenthal and Kouzman 1997). Subsequent work by Janis has also attempted to integrate agreed knowledge on decision making to construct a general theory specifying the social and psychological sources of error and success in crisis policy making (Janis 1989: 14). Themes relating to pathologies in crisis decision making can be linked to the parliamentary systems of government in the United Kingdom via the argument that aspects of political structure shape decision making just as much as internal group dynamics:

For this reason, the analysis of group decision-making processes in government should always take place within a broader interdisciplinary, multi-level framework that examines these configurations. Social and political psychologists cannot afford to ignore the broader institutional forces that govern the perceptions, calculations, and behaviour of real-world policymakers. They do so at the risk of arriving at reductionist explanations and identifying all sorts of biases, irrationalities, and information-processing pathologies, whereas seasoned observers of organizational and political behaviour, who are more aware of meso-level considerations and constraints and of paradigms of governance that do not accord a central place to its problem-solving and information processing functions, would find these conclusions to be both overly simplistic and normatively crude. ('tHart 1994: ix)

Connecting Acute Stage Themes and Representative Assemblies

In what ways are the analytical themes related to the acute phase of crisis management connected to the study of parliaments? First, perspectives that emphasise the polycentric nature of decision making structures provide further credence to the hypothesis that parliamentary involvement in acute crisis management is possible. As was noted in chapter one, crisis management can no longer be described simplistically as an exclusive executive function. The realisation that modern crisis responses often require co-ordinated multi-actor and multi-agency involvement justifies more detailed analyses of other institutions during crisis episodes. These approaches also draw our attention towards issues of legitimacy and legitimation. As crisis responses broaden in terms of the nature and numbers of actors involved, issues of legitimacy are raised in relation to the authorities, actors and policies involved. For example, the degree of legitimacy surrounding a crisis response engaged contingently, with little time for consultation, and in a necessarily authoritative manner may affect policy performance by influencing levels of stakeholder co-operation. Underlining the importance of the concept of legitimacy to a contemporary crisis response once again allows a link to be traced between the study of parliament and crisis management. Large polycentric crisis responses with multiple state and non state actors could have their legitimacy affected via their relationship (or lack of) with the representative framework of the state. Second, leadership and decision making studies highlight the interrelationship between legitimacy and decisions taken during crisis episodes. Part of this emerging research agenda included the call for the micro-level of analysis to be set in relation to meso- and macro-level structures and processes which 'undermine, sustain or increase the legitimacy of political administrative institutions' (Hansen and Stern 2001: 179). However, in the crisis management literature that considers legitimacy, little is made of the role of parliaments despite the fact that they can, because of their constitutional position, be used by the researcher to link these levels of analysis together. Third, perspectives that focus on

conflict, politics and the nature of liberal-democracy during crisis clearly correlate with the study of representation and parliaments. Two different views of a crisis response were outlined above, both of which had implications for the potential importance of national parliaments. The first conception - which we can call the conflict perspective - described crisis management in terms of interest driven behaviour, disputes and compromise. These approaches justify an understanding of crisis management as a process of inter-agency interaction which is political and democratic rather than scientific and elitist in nature. If this view of contemporary crises is correct, it would be difficult to argue that consultative, deliberative and representative parliamentary procedures are totally incongruous to modern crisis management requirements. A second perspective, however, views crises as periods when democratic principles are 'put on hold' and replaced by more authoritarian forms of action. However, even if correct, this view still acknowledges the need for tokenistic or symbolic processes that provide the veneer of democracy during crises. In such situations parliaments may prove to be important. Each perspective therefore allows for the suggestion that democratic processes and institutions offer functional benefits to a particular type of crisis management. Fourth, research on the pathologies within crisis decision making groups stress that that larger 'paradigms of governance' must be considered alongside micro analyses of behaviour. Once again, therefore, representative structures and the 'Westminster model', as one significant governance paradigm, can be considered to be an influence that casts an enveloping shadow over acute crisis decision making.

2.3 Post-Crisis Recovery Themes

Two different research themes are prevalent in most literature relating to the recovery stages of a crisis. One theme focuses upon the efforts made by authorities to learn lessons and reform in order to prevent or manage future crises more effectively. The aftermath period offers a fertile source of data for those with an interest in learning dynamics because there is

often a clear consensus for change of some sort. As Wildavsky (1988: 245) notes, in the period after a crisis, 'learning is a golden concept: everybody is for it'. Institutional analyses have also described crises as one type of 'critical juncture' or as 'exogenous shocks' capable of shaking the equilibrium of policy sectors from their 'path dependencies' (Pierson 2000; Kay 2003) and policy science has already established that crises can open windows of opportunity which can lead to reconstructions in policy agendas (Kingdon 1984; Keeler 1993). Crises, therefore, can create a conducive climate for change. Learning and reform literature is often based upon rational and technical logic and tends to have an organisational and managerial character. Boin *et al.* (2005: 118), dichotomise these research efforts into two groups: namely, those which are optimistic about the capacity of organisations to learn and reform after crises, such as the so-called High Reliability Theorists (La Porte 1982; Roberts 1990; La Porte and Consolini 1991) and those who have a more pessimistic orientation (Turner and Pidgeon 1997; Perrow 1999; Vertzberger 1990; Lagadec 1997; Clarke 1999; Mitroff 1988; Lovell 1984; Sagan 1993).

A growing concern in this type of literature is the prescribed movement toward 'double loop' rather than 'single loop' learning (Argyris and Schon 1978; Argyris 1982). Single loop learning is the most common form of learning after crises. It refers to:

The correction of practices within the existing policy paths and organizational frameworks. It is learning to deal with manifest problems without having to change core beliefs and fundamental rules of the game ... most crisis commissions' and investigation bodies' reports contain large numbers of recommendations for minor rule adjustments, innovations in equipment and training, improved communications routines, and so on. (Boin *et al.* 2005: 121).

Single loop learning, however, is often insufficient at tackling deeper problems that manifest themselves through crises. Structural-economic theorists in particular would argue that single loop reforms deal with symptoms rather than actual causes and that they entrench

rather than reform the status quo (see Hay 1994, for example). Double loop learning is required to go some way towards dealing with these issues although admittedly even this kind of learning is not radical enough to satisfy many structural-economic theorists, particularly those with a Marxist orientation. Double loop learning refers to 'organizational inquiry which resolve incompatible organizational norms by setting new priorities and weightings of norms, or by restructuring the norms themselves together with associated strategies and assumptions' (Argyris and Schon 1978: 24). Learning here is not simply connected to strategies for effective performance but to the very norms that define effective performance. Recourse to double loop learning usually comes attached to an acknowledgement that 'deeper' norms and objectives used to evaluate and drive effective organisational performance are actually just as much to blame as the tangible organisational practices they underpin. Because of this acknowledgement, double loop learning examines 'hard' (policies, institutions, resources) and 'soft' (values, beliefs, ideology) elements at work in a given paradigm and seeks to change both through a more substantive reform agenda. Double loop learning tends to receive the least attention from practitioners and managers because it is costly in time and effort and is unlikely to provide actors with short-term reciprocal forms of 'pay back' (Korac-Kakabadse *et al.* 2002).

A second, often contradictory, research theme relating to this stage can also be seen in more contemporary work based around analyses of blaming, conflict and politics. The post-crisis stage tends to be intensively political because the allocation of blame can have severe consequences for the legitimacy (and survival chances) of organisations, individuals and even whole regimes. Jackson's (1976) study of crisis policy-making, for example, was the first in the field to stress that post-crisis, 'the most important consequences may be in the development or loss of support for the political system' (Jackson 1976: 209). Conversely, as was noted in chapter one, these periods may present new opportunities that benefit actors

and agencies. The intensified political stakes and the intense public scrutiny surrounding this period often encourages political machination instead of 'rational' evaluation of crisis management efforts, precisely because 'crises may set the stage for fundamental and drastic reform of the system, tension release, open conflict, or accelerated circulation of elites' (Boin 2004: 173). This theme was touched upon in the discussion in chapter one of symbolic output, which drew attention to the work of several crisis management authors who alluded to the potential importance of parliaments in terms of framing. Those approaches highlight how those with power and influence during this stage can, deliberately or unconsciously, construct blame, frame incidents and determine the nature of the politics gravitating around the aftermath stages. The framing process in this stage tends to involve 'a delicate blend of factual reconstruction, manipulation of images and lesson-drawing ... shaped in the mass media, as well as the political-bureaucratic arena and the legal system' (Boin *et al.* 2005: 100).

Researchers have tended to treat learning and political themes in isolation but modern crisis management research has highlighted the association between policy learning and political machination in the aftermath of crises. One study, for example, draws attention to the interaction between these two dimensions:

Programmatic success or failure is one thing, the *political* legitimacy of programmatic decisions quite another. The programmatic and political levels need not correlate. Policy and politics in this respect resemble the private firm in which the logic guiding the production division is quite different from the logic of the sales division ... Thus successful indicators at the programmatic level may easily be followed by indicators proving high controversy, even 'scandals', and obvious political failure. Or vice versa: something which is definitely a programmatic failure may never attract the attention of the media, the population or important political actors. (Albaek 2001: 466, original emphasis)

Intensive political dynamics at this stage tend to expose the 'lesson learning' picture painted by some academics and practitioners as somewhat erroneous. As Rosenthal (2003: 132)

explains, 'models of crisis management in which immediate crisis response is followed by rational lesson learning, recovery and rehabilitation may serve well as prescriptive arrangements but do not always reflect the reality of crisis as process'. Political crisis studies, therefore, tend to eschew the 'idealised' notion of a crisis offering lessons that are easy to implement:

The post modern crisis is very unlikely to conform to this picture. It is much more realistic to assume that it is the focal point for intense and protracted political contestation. The more we know about a crisis, the less likely we are to learn from it. This is the case, because in the politics of blaming, information is tailored to be ammunition ... data are selected and moulded to construct winning arguments in a battle for political-bureaucratic survival. ('tHart and Boin 2001: 184)

Paul 'tHart, and others such as Uriel Rosenthal and Arjen Boin advocate going beyond a 'naïve preoccupation' with learning by examining the dynamics of blame, the modus operandi of accountability mechanisms, and the politics of crisis termination. These emerging modes of inquiry show how the period following the resolution of the acute events can often be more crisis prone than the period directly after the acute event's impact (Rosenthal 2003: 132). In these perspectives, recovery and rehabilitation are often perverted by a political crisis or series of crises after the initial disruptive event (Rosenthal 2003; Boin *et al.* 2005). In this stage, a set of events shift:

from the level of operations to the levels of policy and politics. What began as an accident or a series of incidents turns into a story about power, competence, leadership and legitimacy (or lack of it). Hence the difference between crises that end quickly and those that do not depends in large part on the peculiar dynamics of investigation and accountability. In this intensely political phase of crisis management, leaders must negotiate the challenges of accountability in order to preserve the legitimacy of governance. (Boin *et al.* 2005: 100).

These studies do touch (briefly) upon the role that national parliaments play in these dynamics and, just as importantly, factors that prevent legislatures from delivering effective forms of accountability. One problem in this regard relates to the involvement of the

legislature in previous policy. If parliamentary members have sanctioned policy which has been interpreted as a cause of the crisis, or agreed with executive-led crisis management decisions which are then defined as problematic, then it may find that its accountability processes become hollow (‘tHart and Boin 2001: 37-38). Alternatively, actors and authorities may be subjected to accountability mechanisms which are more symbolic or ritualistic (‘tHart 1993). Parliamentary accountability mechanisms may convey the appearance of accountability in action but allow elites to deflect blame or mask issues. Other studies have highlighted how the requirements for effective crisis management and the requirements for effective reform management are two very different things (Boin and Otten 1996; Boin and ‘tHart 2003). Essentially the difference between each set of requirements stems from the fact that substantive reform requires movement towards a new future by leaders untainted by blame but effective crisis management seeks to restore the status quo as quickly as possible, often through means that attract post-crisis criticism and political side effects. What this means is that it is very difficult for crisis managers to become reform leaders. Learning processes can also fall prey to ‘uniqueness’ problems caused by pressures to rectify the perceived weaknesses in preparedness. Political pressure, for example, often causes reformist decision makers to put in place future plans that will manage a carbon copy of the previous event (Rosenthal *et al.* 1989). Political labels such as ‘post-Chernobyl’ or ‘post Foot and Mouth’ capture the misguided nature of politically driven management strategies that do not anticipate for different scenarios. Regardless of these issues:

Political accountability is embedded in parliamentary and juridical settings. It is most commonly focused on political officeholders and senior executives. Its driving force is the logic of the *rechtsstaat* [rule of law], which requires that extraordinary powers assumed and the far-reaching decisions taken during the course of a crisis need to be checked and accounted for. In the heat of a crisis the emphasis tends to lie very strongly with the executive branch of government. It is only when the pace slows down that legislative assemblies and other accountability fora have a chance to reassert themselves, as they are expected to do by law, custom and popular expectation. (Boin and ‘tHart 2001: 37)

Connecting Post-Crisis Themes and Representative Assemblies

Clearly, analyses of the post-crisis stage and the content of official 'lesson drawing' inquiries are a crucial component in the construction of this thesis's analytical framework and the empirical narrative of each case study. British representative assemblies are expected to be involved at this stage, which links the post-event period back to the preparedness stages at the start of the process model. Post-crisis learning themes can be connected and linked to the likely involvement of UK parliaments through the concept of parliamentary accountability, principally engendered in the UK through the doctrine of ministerial responsibility. If initiated, parliamentary processes that pursue ministerial accountability for issues surrounding a crisis episode may have an influence over 'programmatic' lesson learning, particularly when 'single loop' change is being pursued. Select committee reports which do not propose radical reform, for example, may be recognised by officials as influential in terms of policy adjustment. Double loop learning efforts - the pursuit of 'deeper' objectives, norms and assumptions - can also be linked to the parliamentary framework in a broad sense. The direction of the new policy paradigms and policy paths after a crisis are likely to be significantly shaped and constrained by pre-existing political and policy structures (Gorges 2001). Once again, therefore, a connection can be drawn between the formulation of crisis policy and the enveloping framework of the parliamentary state. Support for this argument can be found in crisis management literature, which emphasises the way in which democratic context shapes the lessons learned in the crisis aftermath (Schneider 1992; Stern 1997). Eric Stern (1997), for example, builds on the diverse interdisciplinary literature on experiential policy learning (Argyris and Schon 1978; Etheredge 1985; Sabatier 1987; Lebovic 1995) by linking them to post-crisis periods. Stern examines the relationship between democratic system (policy communities, accountability mechanisms, public discourse) and post-crisis reforms. This relationship, Stern theorises, is pivotal to an evaluation of governmental ability to learn from crisis episodes:

Learning takes place against a communicative social backdrop which shapes cognitive processes and content. Innovations are formulated as a response to characteristics of the status quo. Political positions adopted by individuals (or collectivities) are positioned in relation to the constellation of political positions occupied by other actors (and the actor's own history of prior positions). Structural pressures toward continuity, change and differentiation affect the content of policy moves. In order to understand a particular policy initiative, it is important to develop an understanding of the political (and intellectual) context which gave rise to the move in question. (Stern: 1997: 75)

Post-crisis themes of a political nature also have a strong relevance to the study of parliaments. It is highly likely that at this point in the crisis cycle parliaments will become significantly engaged as politics overtakes operational considerations. Because political machination requires communication between political system and public, legislatures that initiate post-crisis forms of accountability of a public nature are likely to be used by those with an interest in allocating or avoiding blame to broadcast their versions of events and influence judgements on success and failure. As 'tHart *et al.* (2001) indicated, analyses of post-crisis politics must pay attention to the modus operandi and effects of accountability mechanisms.

Contemporary crisis literature has often referred to parliamentary involvement in post-crisis periods (Boin and 'tHart 2001; Kenis 2001; Boin *et al.* 2005; Resodihardjo 2006). This would suggest that involvement at this stage is likely to be greater than at any other point in the crisis management process. The most interesting aspect of this swathe of literature is the way in which the role of the parliament appears to be taken for granted. Parliamentary involvement in this regard often tends to be referred to incidentally or descriptively; part of the empirical narrative of research rather than a specific analytical concern. Parliaments are certainly recognised as a venue for learning and aftermath politics but the effects that they must produce are never directly analysed in any depth despite the descriptive recognition that they are given (see Resodihardjo 2006, for example, where *Hansard* is repeatedly used to describe a framing process). Alternatively the role of the parliament, while recognised, is

subsumed in larger analyses of the post-crisis stage generally (see Boin *et al.* 2005). Other studies, meanwhile, research the role of public inquiries post-crisis with no reference to parliaments whatsoever (see Elliot and McGuinness 2002). The tendency to skate over the role of parliaments at this stage is peculiar. To describe the involvement of parliaments during this stage briefly and descriptively, and then to stress the importance of democratic context, accountability mechanisms, legitimacy dynamics, and political communication and symbolism highlights a poor understanding (or disregard) of the multiple functions that a parliament performs in a political system. Post-crisis research agendas should recognise that parliamentary analysis could provide an ideal institutional lens for the examination of the politics-learning relationship. Conversely, post-crisis stages provide a new and relevant context in which to test the nature and effectiveness of parliamentary accountability mechanisms. This is because crisis inquiries:

Do not just put the response capabilities of authorities to the test, but also the democratic authenticity of the governance systems in which crises occur. To what extent does the accountability process become a truth-finding dialogue, and to what extent does it escalate into inquisition and blame games? ... A crisis tests the institutional mechanisms for calling elites to account ... Only those who have the wisdom and the courage to prioritize the effectiveness and legitimacy of the system as a whole rather than their short term personal and organizational interests can hope to escape self-defeating blame games (Boin *et al.* 2005: 111-112)

2.4 Connecting in Greater Detail: Crisis Stages and Representative Assemblies

The conclusion to chapter one introduced the argument that crisis management and parliamentary researchers examine similar themes from different perspectives. As part of this argument, the chapter touched on a number of recurrent topics that highlighted crisis management as political in nature and showed that certain crisis concepts could be linked to the analysis of representative assemblies. In particular, symbolic outputs were defined as a potentially important connection between parliaments and crisis management. These potential relationships deserve to be explored more fully for the benefit of both paradigms.

If the UK Parliament represents in political terms ‘the sun around which every planet revolves’ (Bogdanor 1999: 1) then it is clearly possible to argue that a parliamentary perspective offers an ideal unit of analysis for the exploration of some of the more political dimensions of crisis management. This argument, however, was already posited in chapter one’s conclusion. The purpose of this chapter, and this conclusion, is to develop these arguments further by linking research themes built around the stages of crisis management to ideas about representation and representative assemblies. Chapter three brings this process full circle by tracing connections ‘backwards’ from specific parliamentary functions to the crisis themes discussed here and in chapter one.

At this stage, what can be argued is that there is a clear and consistent connection between political phenomena (systems, institutions, and principles) and each stage of the process model. The pre-crisis literature on political causation, vulnerability and risk; the acute stage literature on the legitimacy-crisis response relationship; and, the literature on the learning-politics relationship all highlight the fact that there is a correlation between political variables and the various stages of crisis management. These correlations added credence to the argument that parliamentary and crisis analysts are talking the same language and also allowed more specific suppositions to be made about the crisis management-parliament relationship. A synopsis of these proposals is provided below in order to move a step closer to the presentation of the thesis’s analytical framework.

Crisis management, vulnerability and political science literatures were used to suggest that parliamentary involvement in the *pre-crisis stages* of each case study may be present in terms of causing or incubating crises. Institutional crisis theory in particular was used to posit a number of connections between the two analytical domains by suggesting that parliaments are a likely factor in the escalation or indication of endemic problems within

policy sectors. Parliaments may also be capable of affecting preparedness policy tangibly via post-crisis accountability, learning or political dynamics. Finally, the quality of risk regulation, to a large extent, depends on the ability of a parliamentary system to represent, deliberate and legitimise risk policy.

Crisis management literature was also used to extrapolate a number of proposals relating to parliamentary involvement in the *acute stage* of each case study. The type of parliamentary involvement here may depend on the nature of the crisis response in each case study. At one end of a spectrum exists a view of crisis management where the response is wholly state-led, operational, authoritarian, apolitical and managed from the centre. To be effective these responses require immediate co-operation and acquiescence. Parliaments could be an important part of these responses because to be effective, state crisis managers have to be invested with some form of authority or form of 'legitimacy capital' (Hanberger 2003); which can only exist in the first instance through their attachment to a legitimating representative system. Alternatively, parliaments may be important for the provision of symbolic or tokenistic gestures during these responses, which provide the veneer of democracy while democratic norms have, in fact, been suspended for those involved in the crisis's resolution. At the other end of the scale is a view of crisis management which emphasises the involvement of a network of diverse state and non-state actors and crisis responses characterised by conflict, compromise and interest driven behaviour. These kinds of response are also compatible with parliamentary involvement, not least because they are political, rather than scientific or elitist in character. Parliaments may become involved here if operational politics blur into the wider political environment or if the policies and actions that emerge from a 'mixed' response require legitimacy and co-operation. Thus, decision making units, and perhaps more importantly implementation routes, may have to be attached to legitimating (parliamentary) processes of some kind. The conceptual thread that links all

of these acute-stage proposals is legitimacy. In all types of crisis, the relationship between crisis management authorities, legitimacy and effectiveness cannot be ignored. If UK representative assemblies can affect the legitimacy of specific crisis management authorities they must be considered to be worthy of further analysis. Chapter three outlines in a detailed manner several ways in which parliamentary functions could be able to affect legitimacy in this sense.

Crisis management literature explicitly suggests that parliamentary involvement in the *post-crisis stage* is highly likely. Parliaments, if involved in post-event inquiries, are likely to be a strong variable on the quality of learning and reform or the ability of elites to avoid or allocate blame. On one hand, greater attention may be paid to lesson drawing if those responsible are aware that mechanisms exist through which they can be held accountable or culpable. Legislative inquiry may also provide the evidence upon which effective single and double loop lessons can be built. Conversely, parliaments can act as forums for post-crisis political machinations which thwart genuine learning attempts. Thus, the representative assembly is capable of encouraging effective crisis learning or, alternatively, providing a mechanism through which the challenges of crisis reform can be avoided.

Throughout the discussion above, recourse has been made to the interaction between policy making across the crisis management stages and the overarching framework of the representative system. Policy making within the state cannot be divorced analytically from the parliamentary state and crisis management policy is no exception. Preparedness policy, as analyses of risk regulation indicate, cannot be separated from political context; the structures, characteristics and pathologies of decision making units during acute stages cannot be considered in isolation of the wider patterns of governance which surround them; and, finally, the single and double loop reforms that follow crisis episodes cannot be fully

understood if they are analytically severed from the surrounding framework of the parliamentary system they emerge from.

Chapter Three:

Specific Parliamentary Literatures and Crisis Management

Themes

Introduction

This chapter continues to develop the analytical framework of the thesis by linking parliamentary literatures to the themes outlined in chapters one and two. Essentially the chapter provides a re-examination of the contemporary importance of parliamentary functions to a new area of political science (crisis management). A range of functions are presented below, which direct attention to macro, meso and micro levels of analysis. These functions are discussed in relation to their potential relevance to modern modes of crisis management and, where possible, related to the 'stages' of crisis.

The study of representative assemblies tends to be functionalist in nature because, as Robert Packenham noted, each parliamentary scholar 'says or assumes that legislatures have consequences for the political system at large and provides some indication of what he thinks those consequences are ... in *this* sense we are all functionalists' (Packenham 1990: 82, original emphasis). This thesis does not deviate from this trend. Its primary goal is to examine the contribution that British legislative assemblies may have for the management of contemporary crises. In this thesis, the functions of a representative assembly are also defined in broad terms as consequences affecting social and political phenomena. Conceptualising parliamentary functions broadly as political consequences opened up the horizons of parliamentary research in the final quarter of the twentieth-century (Leston-Bandeira 2004: 7). It not only allowed new functions to be added to the more 'traditional' dimensions of parliamentary study (see Wahlke 1971) but also, as in the case of Packenham's study of the Brazilian Congress, allowed an understanding of how 'taken for

granted' parliamentary processes can have different consequences under different conditions. Thinking of the legislature in these broad terms helps us to widen out the search for parliamentary functions that apply to crisis management by providing two specific advantages. First, it allows us to avoid a sole concern with internal parliamentary procedure and activity in order to consider a wider spectrum of parliamentary functions. Second, it permits us enough conceptual 'slack' to re-examine the effects of 'traditional' parliamentary functions in an under-researched context (a crisis episode). Crisis periods create social, economic and political conditions that are abnormal. During these periods, representative functions that are taken for granted may have different effects because of the changed context. Conceptualising functions as consequences allows us to consider parliamentary output that may be sterile or important during periods of 'normalcy' but fundamentally different during the conditions of a crisis.

3.1 Macro (System Level) Functions

Representative systems may be relevant to the management of crises. A range of propositions are set out below which suggest that the concepts of diffuse support and regime legitimacy may be relevant to state stability and that representative structures may affect crisis management agency.

Diffuse Support, Legitimacy and Resilience

The representative system can be viewed as a mechanism that generates 'diffuse support' (Easton 1965; Wahlke 1971; Loewenberg 1971; Judge 1993) which is expressed in the form of legitimacy and trust in political objects (Easton 1975: 447). The conceptualisation of representative systems as producers of 'diffuse support' has applicability to crisis management because, as chapters one and two explained, legitimacy is a concept that can bridge parliamentary and crisis management analysis together.

Diffuse support is a form of generalised attachment to political objects that is not based on specific political or policy outputs. Instead it is grounded in more rudimentary beliefs in the appropriateness of the ideological, structural and institutional characteristics of the political system (Easton 1965: 272-273). In liberal democracies diffuse support is primarily generated through evaluations of the political 'rules of the game', which are in turn formalised through the ideology, structure and institutions of a representative system. In his systems analysis, Easton (1965: 237-252) argues that regime structures that allow members of a polity to express conflicting points of view; to vent grievances; to mobilise support for demands; and to influence centres of authority culminate in a form of support that exists regardless of the actual satisfaction of specific demands. In other words, the fact that some form of representative process *exists* is more important to the development of regime support and legitimacy than the effective functioning or policy outcomes produced through any one process. In this regard, diffuse support can be contrasted against the concepts of specific support and output legitimacy discussed in chapter one.

The argument that regime structure facilitates support can also be found in the literature on legitimacy. David Beetham's treatise on the legitimisation of power, for example, outlines three criteria relevant to this discussion, which contribute to state legitimacy and regime support (Beetham 1991: 16). First, authority should be exercised from an approved source. Second, processes should exist that allow a general interest to be catered for with regard to government output. Finally, the consent of those subordinate to the state must be demonstrated. British legislatures, as the centrepieces of their respective representative systems, facilitate these criteria symbolically and instrumentally. They reflect popular opinion about the correct location of political authority as they establish sovereignty in the populace itself; ostensibly cater towards a national interest through a system of territorial

representation; and, they symbolise the fulfilment of the electoral process where consent is granted to newly incumbent authorities. Accordingly, Beetham in a later work identified the representative assembly 'as the most important device for reconciling the requirements of popular control and political equality with the exigencies of time and the conditions of the modern territorial state' (Beetham 1992: 41).

Ideological support can also be attributed to the model of parliamentary government in the United Kingdom. David Easton (1965) discusses a 'legitimizing ideology', which he defines as 'ethical principles that justify the way power is organized, used and limited and that define the broad responsibilities expected of the participants of particular relationships' (Easton 1965: 292). The argument made by Easton is that these values underpin the political structure and validate the exercise of power and the organisation of specific authorities. However, care should be taken not to assume that structures actually reflect these values. In the United Kingdom, the legitimating principles underlying the constitution are not always reflected in political practice. A prime example of this divergence can be seen in the doctrine of ministerial responsibility. The doctrine's symbolic values legitimise government action but its practice in actuality has been described as 'inverted' (or perverted) and been 'almost universally dismissed for its mythical qualities or its practical weaknesses' (Judge 1993: 136). However, the symbolic and ideological values underpinning the doctrine cannot be ignored. According to Judge (1993; 1999; 2004), constitutional rules of this nature which symbolise the *principle* of parliamentary *democracy* in the United Kingdom generate support for the *practice* of parliamentary *government*. Thus the 'legitimising mythology' embodied in the parliamentary systems facilitates diffuse support via the symbolism of its normative principles.

The argument that the representative system contributes to the generation of diffuse support

in a liberal democracy is hardly novel. However, the concern here is directed towards the potential consequences that diffuse support may have in terms of the management of contemporary crises.

Diffuse Support and the Political System: The Consequences for Crisis Management

Significant failings in a political system can lead to the withdrawal of regime support and legitimacy, which can in turn lead to 'dramatic breaches of social and political order' that can disturb or even destroy political and social structures (Beetham 1991: 5-6). The 'critical morality' and structure(s) of the state in the United Kingdom can be viewed as legitimate because of the absence of these large scale breaches of order, which usually develop in the form of political violence and revolution. What this means is that regime legitimacy and diffuse support, promoted through evaluations of the existence of representative characteristics within the state, generate stability (defined here as durability and the absence of abrupt change).

In chapter one, it was noted how one of the first bodies of literature to discuss crisis management (the international relations perspectives) described crises as a lack of systemic stability. The argument presented here is that diffuse support and regime legitimacy can enhance systemic stability, leading to stronger national resilience and more effective crisis prevention. Stability in this sense has two major consequences for the relationship between politics and crisis management. First, it reduces the likelihood of certain types of crisis (civil unrest; revolution; coup d'etat; political violence) that could threaten a political system. This means that approved political regimes can be capable of preventing crises. Moreover, these kinds of political system may also reduce the possibility that crisis events or policy failures will encourage further political unrest and a deterioration of the crisis. Second, it allows the state as a whole to overcome 'shock and failure' (Beetham 1991: 33) or 'stress and

disturbance' (Easton 1965: 84-90) caused by smaller scale crises that damage sub-state components. The existence of structural features that generate generalised forms of support can reduce negative sentiments caused by crises, providing political objects in the system or the system as a whole with a better ability to 'bounce back' from de-stabilising crises. Thus, diffuse support and regime legitimacy can both be thought of as providing 'a reservoir of good will upon which a system may draw credit in times when things are going badly from the point of view of providing satisfactions for the members of a system' (Easton, 1965: 249). This argument has been reinforced by parliamentary scholars such as Lowenberg (1971: 200), who compared the 'symbolic saliency' of the German Reichstag and the British House of Commons during the economic depression of 1930-32. In the German case, a lack of positive sentiment in support of the values underpinning the legislature - a low degree of diffuse support - was one factor which exacerbated the crisis and contributed to the loss of the Weimar regime's stability and its eventual capitulation.

Diffuse Support and Specific Authorities: The Consequences for Crisis Management

Specific state authorities and their policies also benefit from 'overflows' of positive belief in the ideological and structural legitimacy of the political system (Easton 1965: 287). This transmission of legitimacy from structure to agency has a relevance to this thesis because it returns us to the argument that representative institutions can have effects over legitimacy dynamics. In this case, however, legitimacy is being generated by the representative system as a whole instead of one institution. This structure-agency relationship could have a number of effects.

First, the legitimacy of those state authorities involved in a crisis response, partly generated by their attachment to the representative system, can encourage a predisposition among those affected by crisis policies to accept decisions as binding. Thus order, co-operation and

compliance to authoritative decisions can be engendered through positive evaluations of the legitimacy of the political system which transfers into specific support for offices, incumbent actors and their decisions. Regime legitimacy and diffuse support can help commit resources and rally energies leading to better policy performance from all affected (Beetham 1991: 33; Easton 1965: 155; 1975: 455).

Second, regime legitimacy, to an extent, could allow authority figures to concentrate on crisis decision-making rather than the maintenance of their own status as a decision taker. As was noted in chapter two, a number of authors have suggested that if the authority underpinning crisis decision makers begins to erode during the acute management stage, the future effectiveness of policy may suffer (de Vroom 2001; Rosenthal *et al.* 2001; Hansen and Stern 2001; Boin and 'tHart 2003). Beetham also provides some support for this argument when he states:

Where the powerful have to concentrate most of their efforts on maintaining order, they are less able to achieve other goals; their power is to that extent less effective. The classroom teacher provides a typical example. If pupils do not share a belief in the value of education, on which the justification for the teacher's power is based, or have no respect for the individual teacher, he or she will have to devote correspondingly greater energies to maintaining order than teaching. To that extent the purposes for which power is held will not be achieved, and this may lead in turn to a further erosion of legitimacy. (Beetham 1991: 28)

If energy has to be diverted from a crisis response to focus on the political construction of legitimacy, effectiveness will be threatened. In this situation crisis leaders may find that their responses become trapped in Rosenthal *et al.*'s (1991: 14) 'vicious circle', as discussed in chapter two, where shortfalls in legitimacy lead to reductions in effectiveness and reductions in effectiveness worsen levels of support. State legitimacy can provide a normative base, built upon symbolic democratic principles, that ensures that a majority of decisions receive at least the minimum level of co-operation and quality of performance

(Beetham 1991: 33). Thus, what Hanberger (2003) defines as legitimacy 'capital' may enhance the quality of crisis management decisions.

Third, beliefs in the ideological or structural legitimacy of a regime could be manipulated instrumentally by incumbent authorities to build specific support for crisis management efforts (Easton 1965: 296; Finn 1991: 9; Judge 2004: 687). The symbolic norms, values and procedures of parliamentary democracy can be relied upon to generate and maintain the legitimacy of government actions instrumentally in a time of crisis. In other words, the 'legitimising mythology' of parliamentary democracy could play a tangible role in the more symbolic forms of crisis politics outlined in chapters one and two.

Fourth, following on from the above, diffuse support could potentially help authorities held responsible for crisis management failures (in terms of causation or mismanagement) to maintain or repair support from the public. Supportive sentiments, derived from structural legitimacy, provide the organisations and incumbents of authority roles with some degree of legitimacy capital. This may be crucial to these authorities during the post-crisis evaluation stage when blame, culpability and reform dynamics begin. This again suggests that parliaments may have a role in promoting durability and resilience. In this case, however, it may be the resilience of individual organisations rather systems.

Representative Structure and Policy Choice

A second structure-agency effect may connect crisis managers and representative systems. A link may exist between the framework and ideology of a representative system and the policy deliberations of crisis leaders. David Judge (2004: 687) and others (Rhodes 2000: 62; Marsh *et al.* 2001: 28; Richards and Smith 2002: 48; Bogdanor HC 238 2000: q.186) have contended that the 'legitimising mythology' of constitutional prescription, as derived from

the Westminster model, shapes political behaviour by affecting how politicians and bureaucrats perceive themselves and their environment. The interface between structure and agency in this sense draws attention towards a possible connection between crisis management policies and the parliamentary systems of government. David Judge's (1993), theoretical challenge to 'post-parliamentary' arguments within policy research is worth considering in this regard. In *The Parliamentary State*, Judge advocates that:

An adequate conception of policy making requires the activities of policy communities to be located within the broader framework of representative government. To conclude that the [UK] legislature's substantive contribution is limited, even peripheral in the case of detailed formulation and implementation, does not mean that parliament is peripheral to the process of policy making itself. (Judge 1993:124)

He continues by indicating that:

Although it is conventional to dismiss the doctrine of ministerial responsibility as part of the mythology of British government, it still acts as part of the 'critical morality' of the constitution, *a morality imbued in the psyche of politicians and bureaucrats alike* ... So if the core of policy making is policy communities comprised of government departments and institutionalised interest groups, it is surrounded, encompassed and ultimately delimited by the legitimating frame of the parliamentary system itself. (Judge 1993: 125-126, emphasis added)

In the same vein, Bogdanor (HC 238 2000: q.186) has also commented on the connections between parliamentary myths and executive action by noting how, 'ministerial accountability may be a myth ... but it is a very powerful myth that affects the way ministers and civil servants operate'. The problem with these arguments, despite their logical grounding, is that neither academic reinforced it with substantive evidence. It was never demonstrated that the morality of the constitution affects the thinking of bureaucrats or politicians within government. To some extent, empirical support for these claims can be found in research by Marsh *et al.*, (2001; 2003), who found that the culture and organisation of Whitehall departments was influenced by civil service conceptions of what the authors

call 'the British political tradition', which:

advocates a limited conception of popular representation and conservative notion of responsibility. It is informed by a top-down view of democracy that downplays the importance of participation. Thus, there is virtually no emphasis within the British system on the notion that the government should be responsive to the population. Instead ministers and civil servants believe in responsible, strong, government; with its emphasis on the idea that the governing elite should be capable of taking strong, decisive and necessary, even if unpopular action. It is a top-down view of government that asserts that government knows best. Both ministers and civil servants subscribe to this elitist, leadership, view of democracy. (Marsh *et al.* 2001: 180)

The perceptions of civil servants in relation to the 'British political tradition' and their place within it allow these authors to challenge Rhodes's claims about the pluralistic character of UK governance (Rhodes 2000) on the basis that these perceptions concentrate power in Whitehall. This debate, however, is somewhat tangential to this thesis. What is far more important is the connection that Marsh *et al.* make between civil service perceptions about the 'British political tradition' and organisational change, policy choices and political relationships within Whitehall departments (Marsh *et al.* 2001: 244). These findings are of importance because they connect the representative framework to policy choices, allowing an argument to be made that the mere existence of a representative structure can influence the organisation and policies of a crisis response by affecting the perceptions of civil servants. These lines of argument add another dimension to the claim made throughout chapter two that the democratic framework surrounding crisis management authorities could affect their policies and practice.

So far it has been argued that parliaments play a role in the generation of diffuse support, which creates a stable framework within which crises can be prevented, moderated and managed. The claim has also been made that structure-agency effects are likely to exist between the representative framework and crisis management authorities. These effects, it

was argued, could affect legitimacy dynamics or the organisation and policies of a crisis response. In order to build a more definitive analytical framework, these functions can be complimented by more observable parliamentary outputs, located at the meso level of analysis, that are likely to directly affect crisis responses. The concept of ‘specific support’ outlined in chapter one can be returned to in order to assist this process.

3.2 Meso (Institutional) Level Functions

Meso-level functions are performed by groups of representatives within their assemblies. At this level of analysis, scrutiny, deliberative, cathartic and policy influencing functions can be located. These functions can be associated with David Easton’s concepts of specific support and associated outputs (Easton 1965: 353)

‘Specific Support’ and ‘Associated Outputs’

The argument presented below is that representative assemblies perform ‘associated output’ functions, which are relevant to the management of crises. This argument builds upon the concept of legitimacy dynamics by outlining how associated outputs, amongst other things, can have a bearing on the ‘specific support’ and legitimacy that authorities involved in crises enjoy. After this argument is outlined, the remainder of the chapter sets out a number of associated output functions at the meso and micro levels of analysis. These parliamentary functions form part of the thesis’s analytical framework alongside ‘symbolic outputs’ and the macro functions discussed above.

It will be recalled that specific support is generated by public evaluations of the behaviour and outputs of governmental organisations. Such outputs have been defined by Easton (1965: 348) as ‘authoritative allocations of values, as binding decisions and actions, and as transactions or exchanges between a [political] system and its environment’. More

specifically, Easton (1965: 353) separates two types of output - 'authoritative' and 'associated'. Authoritative outputs refer to binding decisions and actions such as laws, decrees, regulations, orders and judicial decisions that allocate values. This type of output will primarily be the preserve of executives, government departments or departmentally controlled agencies that are involved in policy formulation and implementation.

Any argument which claimed that British representative assemblies produce authoritative outputs would run contrary to almost all contemporary parliamentary literature. The assumption that would be inherent in that claim would be that representative assemblies are policymaking institutions. This contention, while relevant to normative prescription, has been exposed empirically as a rather naïve description of the practice of most representative systems (Wahlke 1971: 101; Patterson *et al.* 1973: 284; Birch 1971: 109). Representative assemblies in Britain do not make legislation but rather influence, consent and legitimise authoritative decisions made elsewhere. Indeed, the first and most important point to note in this respect is that:

Since the thirteenth century the British state has favoured a strong executive. Parliament itself has never constituted, on a continuous basis, a part of the executive; and rarely has it operated as an initiator of state policies. Instead it has been what modern analysts categorise as a 'reactive' institution (Mezey 1979) or a policy influencing assembly (Norton 1984). An understanding of this basic historical fact is important not only in its own right, but also for assessing analyses of modern state dysfunctions and remedial prescriptions. (Judge 1993: 26-27)

Although this observation relates to Westminster, it can be extended to include the devolved representative assemblies because many elements of the Westminster system were either exported directly to Holyrood and Cardiff Bay or have evolved over the formative years of each institution's life. There is already a growing body of evidence about the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament, which indicates an increasing 'distance between

design aspiration and procedural practice' (Judge 2005: 186) in terms of the operation of parliamentary business and each executive's dominance over legislative output (Osmond 2000: 45; Winetrobe 2001: 2; SP Paper 818 2003: para. 1016; Shephard and Cairney 2005: 316). As the devolved institutions move towards the Westminster model, their capacity to produce authoritative outputs reduces.

Establishing a clear link between British representative assemblies and authoritative outputs is therefore problematic. However, representative assemblies do produce substantial amounts of associated outputs. These can be understood as transactions or exchanges between a political system and its environment that can influence the acceptance or rejection of authorities and their policies (Easton 1965: 352-359). A contemporary example, already mentioned in chapter one, is the 'securitization' of political language by elites post 9/11, which facilitates acceptance of anti-terrorist policies by framing controversial provisions as issues of security (see Buzan *et al.* 1998). Indeed, symbolic outputs such as framing and rituals can be considered to be associated outputs because they influence specific support and legitimacy dynamics. Specific policy statements, ranging from the generalised nature of the Queen's speech to the specifics of ministerial statements are also associated outputs (Easton 1965: 359). Ministerial statements in particular are an excellent example of an associated output. Since *Pepper v Hart* the principle that the courts may take into account statements made in Westminster during the passage of a bill as a guide to the provisions of the resulting act has been adhered to (see Littleboy and Kelly 2005). In this example, a verbal statement to a representative assembly has a direct influence on a policy's authoritative nature. On other occasions, failed legislative attempts to produce authoritative outputs, such as an unsuccessful Private Member's Bill or an opposition resolution, can produce an associated output as members gain satisfaction from failed efforts made on their behalf (Easton, 1965: 359). The representative assembly, therefore, does have the potential

to produce a range of associated outputs, which can, if Easton is correct, affect the specific support accorded to other authorities. Parliamentary research has to some extent managed to substantiate the claim that representative assemblies can produce specific support for incumbent authorities. Cotta (1974: 216), for example, points to the 'significant role' that parliaments play in transmitting legitimacy to other political centres. Packenham (1990) argues that the symbolic legitimation function of a legislature will ensure its survival even in non-democratic regimes because a legislature can generate support for the controlling authorities. Indeed, Packenham argued that even if a legislature had no decision making power at all, its functions would still be significant in this sense (Packenham 1990). Patterson *et al.* (1969: 75) and Muller (1971: 1166) have quantitatively tested Easton's arguments - both statistical analyses highlighted how legislatures in the US attract and then disseminate support to other authorities. These pieces of research all indicate that legislatures could have the capacity to influence specific support for authorities during a crisis.

It is clear that crisis management is an activity which is primarily executive-led and relies upon authoritative outputs. However, the contention underpinning the remaining parts of this chapter is that representative assemblies may produce associated outputs that will have some bearing on these executive-led activities. This is what is meant here by the term 'associated output function', which will feature throughout the empirical sections of the thesis. Given their potential importance, it follows that some of the (potential) ways in which parliaments can generate associated outputs should be delineated in greater detail. Within parliamentary literature, a series of specific research endeavours offer a supportive framework for this task. In the 1960s and 1970s, certain parliamentary scholars began to change the nature of their studies. These changes were based on two premises. First, evaluations of a representative system and/or a representative should not be centred solely on

the legislative function. Assessments that use the legislative function as an exclusive evaluative framework erroneously conclude, because of their restricted perspective, that parliaments are inconsequential to many areas of political life. Following on from this, research into the consequences of parliamentary functions moved beyond this type of measurement towards assessments that focused on a range of outputs particularly applicable to the concepts of support, stability and legitimacy. In the preamble to these publications (see for example, Wahlke *et al.* 1962; Eulau and Hinckley 1966; Patterson and Wahlke 1972; Jewell and Patterson 1973; Packenham 1990), these authors all asserted that the institutionalisation of law-making as the primary unit of legislature analysis had:

Hid from inquiry such latent functions as consensus-building, interest aggregation, catharsis for anxieties and resentments, the crystallization and resolution of conflicts, and the legitimization of decisions made elsewhere in the political system. These formulations of the legislative function, not specified in formal charters, followed in the wake of increased executive participation in legislation, as it became evident that the function was taken for granted, i.e., legislation, was more or less incidental to the other functions that a legislature performs. (Eulau and Hinckley 1966: 85)

These functions can be structured around the concepts of specific support and legitimacy dynamics and appear to be far more applicable to modes of crisis management than the law-making role. We can now turn our attention to these functions.

Deliberation as Conflict Management

Chapters one and two highlighted how episodes of crisis are defined by the conflicts that they generate (Rosenthal *et al.* 1991: 213; Boin *et al.* 2005: 58-59). These research efforts often revolve around a 'bureau-political' perspective, which primarily focuses on relationships *within* 'front-line' government crisis responses. Representative assemblies are naturally excluded from these analyses because they are not involved in front-line operations. Nevertheless, the characterisation of crises as periods of conflict allows the

argument to be made that a representative assembly's deliberations could affect the terms of other types of conflict, particularly if some of the pertinent actors and organisations are non-operational. In this sense, the analytical lens is not examining conflict within a crisis response but the degree of political conflict *surrounding* a response. However, as chapter two noted, the line between 'programmatic' and 'political' crisis management is becoming indistinguishable (Albaek 2001). To fully understand the operational dimensions of a crisis response the context and nature of the political conflict surrounding those operations must also be understood.

The main hypothesis about the deliberation function is that it may enable representative assemblies to play a conflict management role during a crisis episode. If this is the case, then deliberative processes are likely to be important to crisis leaders, particularly during the more political stages of a crisis.

Deliberative procedures within legislatures often have an 'equivocal nature', which can soften extreme positions and prevent the polarisation of issues. Parliamentary procedures that are ambiguous or ritualistic, for example, often serve to postpone or obviate acute political conflict and can help facilitate positive sum compromises between political parties when explicit agreement in the public eye is difficult to achieve (Jewell and Patterson 1973: 9; Cotta 1974: 209). By viewing deliberation and decision making in this way:

One can make sense of some apparently ritualistic, wasteful, and baffling ways in which legislatures spend their time, of the elaborate customs of courtesy with which legislators treat each other, of the enactment of ceremonial resolutions, and of the diversion of substantive disputes into procedural wrangles. These activities may well serve to reduce conflict ... and to regulate the really controversial matters by the use of complicated rules of procedure. (Loewenberg and Patterson 1979: 59)

The proposition being made here is that contentious issues could be 'defused' when placed

into a deliberative process (Jewell and Patterson 1973: Cotta 1974: Loewenberg and Patterson 1979). Alternatively, these kinds of proceedings may be unable to reconcile divisive issues clearly or quickly causing frustration. A long process of deliberation could send out the wrong signals by presenting a picture of slow or negligent decision making which does not recognise the urgency of the situation. This could lead to frustration amongst practitioners of crisis management, affected stakeholders and those politicians advocating 'an act now talk later' approach. In this scenario, 'legislative equivocation may lead to or intensify conflicts or promote a deepening of crises' (Jewell and Patterson 1973: 9). Another possibility is that deliberative procedures will have developed into rituals which are predisposed towards executive outcomes. Procedures which are characterised by an inherent bias towards an executive may also exacerbate political tensions by frustrating parliamentary members during a period when their representative abilities are likely to be in demand (and therefore in the spotlight).

The effect of deliberative procedures could be important in terms of shaping the preferences of those affected by crises. Quite simply, represented and representative attitudes could be changed by deliberations in ways which moderate the political conflicts gravitating around a crisis response. This supposition comes from theoretical literature on deliberation which states that the assessment of differing positions and the formulation and articulation of alternatives can shape preferences and reconcile divergent views (Dryzek 1990: 10; Elster 1998: 6; Miller 2003: 183). However, the partisan nature of most parliamentary procedures must be taken into account when making propositions of this kind. If preferences are being modified through deliberative processes, they are perhaps more likely to be changed in a way that mirrors the *real politik* considerations of party political life within a legislature. If this proposition is correct, conflict will be entrenched and polarised, rather than reduced, through parliamentary deliberation. Indeed, deliberative theorists, such as Smith (2005) and

Weale (2002) have already indicated that deliberative processes within parliaments often struggle, because of their political nature, to create the ideal conditions through which deliberative outcomes can be achieved.

The Cathartic Function

Cathartic or 'safety valve' functions can be performed by representative processes, which could allow those affected by crisis to purge anxieties and 'let off steam'. Catharsis could, for example, be facilitated through the legislature via debate or through constituency interactions with elected representatives. Alternatively, the legislature as a whole could attract and absorb the disaffections of affected citizens as they purge their own emotions. This form of associated output, perhaps more than any other, could be salient to the management of crisis in a number of ways, not all of which relate specifically to the concept of support.

a) Shutting of the safety valve can cause a crisis. By allowing citizens to 'vent steam', this classic representative function has the potential to play a role in crisis mitigation. For example, the failure to allow black Americans a voice within US state legislatures was one contributor to the civil rights demonstrations of the 1960s (Jewell and Patterson 1973: 10). Classic parliamentary research, dating back to 1938, has recorded how legislatures acted as scapegoats, reducing tensions amongst the general public that 'might well totalize into attacks upon public order' (Smith 1938: 187).

b) Throughout a crisis episode, the stress and tensions levels of those involved are likely to be extraordinarily high. The frustration of those affected at the sharp end of an acute crisis can develop into opposition and resistance to crisis responses. Allowing catharsis for this frustration could help the effectiveness of crisis responses by reducing the resistance levels

of those involved.

c) The representation of crisis victims during periods of post-crisis inquiry provides another cathartic outlet. The ability of representative channels to allow victims to express opinion and feel listened to has implications for the nature and length of the politics played out in the post-event 'crisis after the crisis' (Rosenthal 2003). According to one study, institutionalised accountability processes offer:

An opportunity for catharsis that enables all involved to demarcate the end of the crisis, and prepare for an altered future. Without it crisis-induced anxieties and tensions would continue to linger. Post-crisis de-briefings and investigations provide a controlled format for professional criticism, expressions of (self) pity and emotional outbursts deemed odd or unacceptable at other times. Precisely because it is controlled in terms of more or less routinized organizational and political protocols, it can perform a sanitizing function. (Boin *et al.* 2005: 101-102)

As in the case of deliberation, the process is just as important as the outcome. Political authorities cannot accede to the demands of all interests, sometimes not even partially, but the representative system can grant these interests an airing- one that is perhaps not obtainable elsewhere. This can be an important factor in the management of crisis because it can allow public tensions to dissipate in a regulated and controlled fashion. Pakenham's findings asserted that:

Completely aside from the decision making powers which the Congress had, its activities had significant consequences for the political system in so far as they reduced tension, provided reassurance, and generally enhanced satisfaction with or acquiescence in the policies and programmes of the ruling government. In this sense, the Congress was a safety valve or a way of letting off steam in a political system where nobody got all he wanted and/or where the government was not willing to let everyone have what they wanted. (Pakenham 1990: 89)

Issue Escape and the Exit Function

Two pieces of research are used below to outline a potentially important area of

parliamentary involvement during crises. The first of these is David Judge's (1993: 120-131) analysis of policy communities and networks and the second is Robert Packenham's (1990: 91-92) description of one specific decision making function performed by the Brazilian Congress.

Many of Judge's publications contain theoretical and empirical challenges to a number of academics who have, in his eyes, over-emphasised the importance of one descriptive model of policymaking (Richardson and Jordan 1979: 174; Jordan and Richardson 1987: 288; Jordan 1990: 473; Richardson 2000: 1006). The concern of this section relates specifically to the empirical challenge that Judge makes to these authors. His contention - that the reality of the UK policy process has been described inaccurately - aids an argument that the representative assembly could influence crisis management policy. This is because Judge professes, as part of his argument, a preference for an alternative description of policymaking through networks, within which the House of Commons can play an important role. The thrust of Judge's observations are gathered in an argument which principally challenges the characterisation of policymaking as being conducted within policy communities and following one particular style. Policy communities are defined as stable coalitions, comprised of departmental officials and approved insider groups, which are compartmentalised around very specific policy areas. The style of policymaking within these communities is consensual. Bargaining and debate is more technical than political because each interest group shares similar views and the successful realisation of shared objectives relies upon interdependency between each group's information and professional expertise. Importantly, the authors that developed this model have repeatedly stressed that one of the key features of a policy community is its exclusivity. For example, policy communities are, according to Rhodes and Marsh (1992: 13), insulated, 'from other networks and invariably from the general public (including Parliament)' (see also, Jordan

and Richardson 1982:81). It is the description of a standard policymaking process as closeted, impenetrable, insulated and ultimately non-political (and therefore non-parliamentary), which Judge repeatedly takes to task. He does this by presenting a series of cases which show that, in reality, UK policy development can be anything but stable, consensual, private and non-political. In contexts which do not appear to be conducive to the functioning of a policy community, Judge argues, it is more accurate to describe policy making as taking place in a larger network of actors and institutions, which is more public and political in nature. Thus, within industrial policy under the Thatcher governments the pursuit of neo-liberal objectives destabilised many 'community' relationships and, 'a picture of fluidity and uncertainty in government-industry relations emerged after 1979 to question some of the basic tenets of the notion of policy communities' (Judge 1993: 126). The specific examples of government-industry destabilisation presented by Judge deserve attention, not because it is important for this thesis to challenge the notion of policy communities but because they allow us to observe how the UK Parliament became involved in policy development under certain conditions. In one example, a policy proposal to introduce a limited list of prescription drugs within the NHS created a political furore, which in turn meant that the issue 'exited' the confines of the policy community into the wider political arena and the affected interest groups turned towards Parliament to engage in public debate about the appropriateness of the policy (Judge 1993: 126). Other decisions, relating to privatisation programmes also, because of their political nature, 'escaped the closed world of bureaucratic accommodation and placed themselves on the public and parliamentary agenda' (Judge 1993: 126). The privatisation of the water industry, for example, was one issue which spilled from Whitehall to Westminster, and meant that, 'parliamentary activity was of significance in affecting policy outcomes' (Judge 1993: 127) as, firstly, a catalyst for the government's privatisation initiative and, secondly, as a focal point for the lobbying efforts of various interest group attempting to influence legislative bills. The important point

to note about this example is that the issue changed from a low level technical concern about water regulation into an ideological debate about privatisation, which increased its political salience and, correspondingly, the involvement of Parliament in the policy debate. Indeed, in all of these cases, conflict, uncertainty, ideological debate and actual crises forced the affected interest groups:

To air their policy grievances in public and actively to involve parliament and parliamentarians in the dispute ... groups that 'really mattered' and possessed the 'ability to exercise some kind of veto', found themselves in the central lobby of the House of Commons and its committee rooms. ... In these circumstances parliament became the focus of group attention, with groups attempting to influence parliamentary opinion. (Judge 1993: 129-130)

According to Judge, these groups sought to influence parliament for a number of reasons. First, parliament can be used to affect the policy 'climate' by generating opinions which are sympathetic to a groups aims or, conversely, articulating dissonance, 'beyond the mundane consensual priorities of those encapsulated within a policy community' (Judge 1993:130). Moreover, parliament can be used by groups in attempts to ensure that specific policy details, which may be lost at the formulation stage within Whitehall are rediscovered and 'make it' to the final stages of initiation. Finally, parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms are a source of interest to specific groups because their oversight of policy implementation can lead to the insertion of new items into the agenda of closed policy communities, thus influencing future policy development. Piecemeal efforts to privatise the British Gas and shipbuilding industries also encouraged further instances of 'issue escape'. In these cases, conflicts generated by ideological conviction, rather than consensual bargaining, characterised the policymaking process and resulted in the industries respective chairman, using 'Westminster to publicise a determined rearguard action against the government's own proposals' (Judge 1993:128). The final case used in this argument is perhaps the most relevant to this thesis. Agricultural policy between 1940 and 1980 mirrored very closely the

dominant conception of policymaking forwarded by Jordan and Richardson as it was dominated by a small number of policy insiders, working with Ministry of Agriculture officials in a close, symbiotic and largely insulated policy community. However, as chapter four explains in greater detail, from 1980 onwards the sector became fragmented, politicised and characterised by conflicts (Smith 1991). Once again, this led to issues escaping into the wider public and parliamentary arenas. The importance of this example, however, is that a crisis - the salmonella in eggs affair - is described by Smith as one cause of the spillage of agricultural issues into the larger policy network.

Robert Packenham's study of the Brazilian Congress has also highlighted how during periods of crisis, when the nation was in the grips of a coup or on the precipice of revolution, the legislature was relied upon to find ways out of apparently intractable constitutional situations. These incidences of decision making are significant because, outside these sporadic episodes, the Congress's decision making power was negligible. Nevertheless:

Under certain specific, relatively infrequent, but recurring conditions in Brazilian politics, the National Congress performs what may be called an 'exit' function. When the political system seems to have reached an impasse and the mechanisms for decision-making which normally characterize Brazilian politics seem incapable of providing a way out of the situation, the elites sometimes turn to the legislature for either the substance or the form, or both, of a decision which will take the system out of the impasse. This 'exit' function is a special case of the decision-making function. (Packenham 1990:91)

For example, one decision, proposed by a congressional commission and then adopted by the whole Congress, was designed as a compromise to end a conflict over the presidency that had divided the military and, 'brought the nation literally to the verge of civil war' (Packenham 1990:92). Packenham, therefore, provides another example of a crisis leading to an issue's escape from the normal decision making process and an corresponding increase in parliamentary power. The examples described by Packenham are different to

Judge's, however, in the sense that the Brazilian parliament was not turned towards by interest groups concerned with individual policies. It was allowed to exercise significant constitutional powers by military and political elites who, under normal circumstances, restrained the legislature's authority.

The importance of Packerham and Judge's work to this thesis can only be realised when they are aligned against the characteristics of contemporary crises, as outlined in chapter one. Comparison of the factors that led to issues escaping from policy communities and the characteristics of modern crises reveal a number of similarities. Crises more often than not are issues of high political salience. They can provoke significant levels of uncertainty, threaten important values, and generate conflict (Rosenthal *et al.* 2001: 6-8). These characteristics are the same as those which tend to force issues out of policy communities. Both Judge and Packerham provide specific examples of actual crises triggering 'issue escape'. Indeed, conventional crisis wisdom dictates that, 'the very occurrence of a disaster or an acute crisis event implies that, at least momentarily, authorities lose control ... They are literally overtaken by events' (tHart 1993:41). When this loss of control occurs, domestic parliaments may become more important to policy making as a site for increased interest group activity, as Judge argues, or as Packerham states, they may be turned towards for political or constitutional solutions. All of this means that in this thesis's chosen case studies, there is a chance of finding evidence which indicates that policy making control escaped from the grip of executive crisis managers and insider groups, entered the wider political arena, and that the representative assemblies influence over crisis management policy grew.

Scrutiny and Accountability

Parliamentary and crisis management literatures indicate that the ability of the representative assembly to scrutinise governmental aspects of a crisis response could affect the management of a crisis in a number of ways. These areas have already been discussed but, because of their importance, they are worth repeating briefly. First, parliamentary processes that pursue ministerial accountability may influence 'programmatic' or 'single loop' reforms. Second, parliamentary systems are likely to be a contextual variable affecting the nature of more significant 'double loop' reforms after a crisis. Third, the ability of scrutiny functions to influence perceptions and 'legitimacy dynamics' means they are likely to provide insights into post-crisis politics. Out of all the stages, the post-crisis period is likely to attract the most parliamentary involvement.

3.3 Micro (Individual) Level Functions

Individual representatives can also produce associated outputs which may be relevant to the management of crises. These micro functions, exercised through the roles attached to territorial representation, are interesting because they point towards a potential involvement in the operational dimensions of crisis management. Constituency duties are multi-faceted; representatives can be ombudsmen, local interest spokespersons, welfare officers and explainers of policy, all of which could be relevant during periods of crisis. Moreover, the effective execution of these tasks can generate support and stability for political objects (Norton and Wood 1993: 2).

Errand Running

The potential importance of many constituency duties to crisis management rests upon the fact that communication is an intrinsic facet of territorial representation that connects political elements together. In previous chapters, it was noted that a large part of

contemporary crisis management research, whether political or practitioner orientated in nature, focuses on the importance of communication. Admittedly, the representative assembly is no longer the sole, or even the primary, communication channel in a polity today. However, as Cotta (1974: 209) notes 'for certain kinds of interests - local or specialized interests - MPs still do a good deal of articulation'. Pakenham (1990) has also described a process where representatives carry out 'errand running' by passing messages from the constituency to the bureaucracy. The increasingly frequent use by the public of their local parliamentary member to communicate specifics into the government bureaucracy, noted by Norton and Wood (1993: 54), is a testament to the continuing importance of this communication channel. It is possible to hypothesise that during acute-crisis stages, the territorial aspect of representation may be invigorated because it is a clear and accessible route between affected constituents and crisis management authorities.

Mobilisation of Local Support

Constituency work can channel popular consent towards policymakers and policies, particularly mid-term policies that have no direct electoral mandate (Beer 1966; Norton and Wood 1993). Policy consent in this sense does not spring from the electoral process. It is conceptualised by Beer as the product of a continually renewed exchange of communication between constituency and representative. Beer provides evidence of how US representatives explained, justified, interpreted and even adjudicated on federal policies in a local context. These local actions improved levels of policy effectiveness by mobilising local consent and support. The UK representative therefore may have the potential to mobilise local consent actively for the effective implementation of centrally created crisis policy.

Horizon Scanning

Communication between government and representatives could also be used to monitor the

pre-crisis environment for upcoming disruptions. Strategies for monitoring the changing cultural environment and assimilating elements into mitigation planning usually involve the incorporation of mechanisms that span social boundaries. These mechanisms allow an organisation to learn about environmental factors that are changing in ways that could incubate crises. A key part of this kind of scanning process, according to the government's current resilience literature, rests on communication between organisations that may be able to identify problems or participate in crisis responses (Cabinet Office 2005). The discussion in chapter two of institutional crises has already argued that parliaments could perform a horizon scanning role. Individual parliamentarians might also contribute to a horizon scanning process because they communicate information between social and political systems. Moreover, communication between social and political systems may also promote a kind of homeostatic stability. If organisations are communicating across boundaries then there is less likelihood of a political disruption emanating from them (Suchman 1995).

Feedback

Territorial representation might also be used to evaluate the effects of ongoing crisis policy during acute or reform stages. The concept of 'feedback' (Easton, 1965: 128-129) is important in this sense. A feedback process, in the language of systems analogy, consists of three basic stages. The first stage involves the impact of outputs from the political system on an environment. The second stage requires the flow of information about these effects back to the authorities in the political system. The third stage involves an adjustment of subsequent outputs based on what was learned from the evaluative feedback. According to one US legislative scholar:

The legislature can be viewed as the central institution in this whole process. It is the legislature that is theoretically the most sensitive to the feedback of information regarding changes in the environment produced by outputs of the political system. Individual legislative representatives are presumably the closest

of all authorities in the system and can most easily detect the environmental effects of public policy. Most of the “hollering” will be directed at them. (Grumm 1972: 268)

Two problems relate to the notion of feedback via UK representative institutions. First, the sensitivity and degree of communication between represented, representative and government in the US is more evident than in the United Kingdom for a number of constitutional and political reasons. In addition, Grumm identifies the theoretical possibility of ‘feedback’ but his rather elaborate statistical research design failed to establish its existence in US state legislatures. This does not mean, however, that British representatives do not carry out this kind of function during crises. It remains theoretically possible, so it should be the subject of inquiry. One study of the role of representation in industrial policy in the United Kingdom, for example, has maintained that ‘the British MP plays an important role in feeding back information regarding the effects of ongoing policy, possibly displaying more sensitivity to some dimensions of these effects than would normally be true of the civil servants responsible for their implementation’ (Wood 1991: 114). Crisis literature supports this proposition - many response stages are governed by feedback. Contingency plans will usually remain untested in a real situation and must be constantly informed by positive or negative feedback ‘signaling both the functionality and legitimacy of the standing arrangement’ (Boin *et al.* 2005: 54). There is, therefore, a potential role for the representative in terms of feeding back information about crisis response support and effectiveness.

Gatekeepers and Lightning Rods

Studies that examine centre-periphery relations in the UK also highlight how parliamentary members can reduce levels of communication between constituency and government (Bulpitt 1983; Wood 1991). Bulpitt (1983), for example, notes how the system of representation in the latter half of the twentieth century had been described as a ‘dual polity’ in which politics

in the centre and politics in the periphery operated in isolation of one another. In this dual polity:

The role of the Member of Parliament, whether Labour or Conservative, was almost that of a buffer between the two spheres or even that of a *representative of the center to the periphery*, rather than the opposite. His job was to filter local grievances, virtually to cleanse them, in such a way as to make them manageable for a decision making machinery at the centre ... the MP was expected to interpret the problems of local constituents in national terms, to assure them or convince them that what they were experiencing was typically experienced by people like them. (Wood 1991: 106, original emphasis)

On a more practical level representatives can act as political 'lightning rods' (Ellis 1994) that take the brunt of negative public opinion in their constituencies. The value of these functions is that by absorbing local emotions, or by filtering local demands before they communicate them onwards, parliamentary members could help 'free up' those crisis managers that are required to focus on operational issues.

3.4 The Relationship between Macro, Meso and Micro Functions

As a final note it is worth considering how associated outputs might also have a general bearing on *regime*, rather than *authority* support during crisis periods. Loewenberg's research, for example, suggests a potential link between the decline in the stability of a regime and the ability of national legislature to meet regularly and perform electoral conversion functions (enacting policy commitments and recruiting political executives). If an electorate loses connection with an executive during a crisis, overall regime stability can suffer. Research that addresses political integration and conflict management functions (Jewell and Patterson 1973: 7-9; Mezey 1979: 10) also suggests that deliberative procedures can have a cumulative effect on regime stability. Symbolic communication literature argues that political symbols and dramaturgy fulfil important functions in the maintenance of order and stability by providing reassurance (Edelman, 1977: 65; 'tHart 1993: 38). Political

science scholars, such as Birch (1971: 120) and Norton and Wood (1993: 2) have also noted that cathartic and constituency functions can enhance regime stability. What this means is that specific support for the actions and outputs of political institutions can, to use Easton's phrase, 'overflow' upwards reinforcing diffuse support sentiments and buttressing other political objects. Easton alludes to this when he states that, 'if the members [of a political system] lose confidence in the ability of any authorities at all to cope with the problems of the day, the effect on support to other levels of the system may be very serious, at least for the persistence of that kind of system' (Easton 1965: 217). This point is returned to during his description of outputs:

The link between outputs and the input of support is much more direct and discernible than in the case of diffuse support. Yet each kind of support will spill over into the other and influence it ... the prolonged encouragement emerging from specific support ... will be likely to lead to deep attachment to the various political objects in general. (Easton 1965: 344)

This is an important point because it means that the actions of specific authorities, parliaments included, can affect larger legitimacy and support dynamics. In other words, the manner in which crises are managed and the role that parliamentary outputs do or do not play in that management may affect the 'reservoir of goodwill' amongst the public that is created by diffuse support and the support levels attached to the political system as a whole.

3.5 Connecting Crisis Management to Parliamentary Analysis: A Research Framework

Before laying out the analytical framework that will guide the empirical chapters of the thesis, it is worth briefly reiterating 'where we are' and 'how we got here' in terms of the connections made between the respective literatures on crises and parliaments. Chapter one introduced the conceptual 'map' of crisis management and posited the argument that crisis and parliamentary researchers examine broadly similar themes from different perspectives.

In particular, this argument was highlighted through a discussion of the more political/symbolic perspectives of crisis management, which, it was argued, had a close 'fit' with the issues that have concerned parliamentary scholars for time immemorial (legitimacy, authority, power, symbolism). A number of crisis characteristics were also identified as being important. The conception of a modern crisis as involving a long chronology with many decisions and decision makers was emphasised alongside an image of crises as political periods that facilitate fluctuations in legitimacy. The polycentric and political nature of crisis episodes provided a starting point for the development of the thesis's theoretical suppositions because it negates any conceptualisation of crisis management as an exclusive, executive-centred competence. Out of these perspectives came one specific hypothesis - that representative assemblies could produce 'symbolic outputs' relevant to the politics and legitimacy dynamics seen during crises. Four broad suppositions were also raised tentatively with the promise that each would be developed in following chapters. First, resilience and stability would be linked to representative assemblies. This argument was developed in chapters two and three and is summarised below. Second, it was stated that a series of representative functions would be shown to have the potential to influence crisis decision making. Chapters one and two developed this argument by outlining a series of connections between the concept of legitimacy and crisis management effectiveness. This chapter has elaborated this connection further by identifying a series of parliamentary functions that have the capacity to affect crisis management processes and, more specifically, 'legitimacy dynamics' in relation to specific authorities. These 'associated output functions' are also summarised below. Third, it was indicated that democratic context might shape the nature of crisis induced policy. This argument was developed significantly in chapter two with reference to the interface between democratic norms, political context and risk regulation; the pathologies within decision making groups affected by patterns of governance; and, the relationship between democratic context and post-crisis

reforms. The correlation between the ‘mythology’ of the parliamentary system and civil service described above developed this line of thinking in chapter three. Finally, it was suggested that political systems and their components might cause or escalate crises. Chapter two fleshed out this suggestion by analysing theoretical perspectives on the systemic cause of crises; the concept of vulnerability; and, specific literatures detailing how political systems and policy sectors facilitate crises. Although the primary inspiration for this argument came from research about the economic-structural contradictions of the state, the literature relating to institutional crises suggests the clearest possible connection between parliaments and the pre-crisis stage via the claim that parliaments are likely to act as ‘escalators’ or ‘dynamic pressures’ which translate deeper root causes into specific crises.

Chapter three has linked parliamentary analysis backwards to the crisis management themes found in chapters one and two by identifying a series of specific parliamentary functions which may be applicable to crisis management. The central theme throughout has been the argument that the existence and activities of UK parliaments have consequences for the political management of crisis. In this sense, this chapter has presented a series of latent and manifest parliamentary functions that could potentially affect a crisis management process. Central to these consequences is the claim that parliaments, *inter alia*, have an ability to affect support levels and legitimacy dynamics. These functions will now form the basis of the analytical framework around which the empirical research will be built.

Micro (Individual) Level Functions

One objective of this research is to determine whether the following functions were performed in each case study and if they are involved, a second objective will be to determine what effects they have had. Constituency roles can be considered to be ‘associated output functions’ performed at the micro level by individual representatives. In

this regard elected representatives may be able to:

- Improve government 'horizon scanning'.
- Perform an 'errand running' function.
- Provide 'feedback' to crisis managers about policies.
- 'Free up' crisis managers from unhelpful forms of communication.
 - as 'lightening rods' which absorb local emotions
 - as 'gatekeepers' or filters
- Mobilise local consent (or dissent) towards crisis authorities.

Meso (Institutional) Level Functions

A series of 'associated output functions', performed within the assemblies themselves, can have a number of effects relevant to crisis management. These outputs have little to do with legislative function but they have the potential to affect: contingent decision making; the politics of crises; legitimacy and support dynamics relating to specific authorities; and, cumulatively, the stability of a regime during crises.

- Parliament(s) as a producer of 'symbolic output': in the form of framing, rituals, masking or other types of 'instrumental' legitimation strategies.
- Policy development influence via the 'issue escape' process or the 'exit' function.
- Cathartic 'safety valve' functions.
- Scrutiny and accountability functions.
- Deliberative procedures in terms of conflict management.

Macro (System) Level Functions

Representative systems can generate 'diffuse support'; expressed in the form of regime legitimacy, trust and political stability, which are essential to the state and individual authorities in times of crisis. The propositions relating to diffuse support are:

- Diffuse Support and parliament in particular, provide the political system with a form of resilience, defined here as an ability to prevent or withstand and recover from disruptive events.
- Diffuse Support 'overflows' from the structure and ideology of the system of parliamentary government, generating support for authorities responsible for managing crises and facilitating co-operation and compliance to authorities. Political legitimacy is particularly important for the implementation of contentious or unpalatable crisis decisions.
- Associated output functions generate specific support, which flows 'upwards' for the benefit of the regime as a whole.

Representative Structure and Policy Deliberations

Effects between representative structures and crisis management agency are also important. Policy making actors and organisations are enveloped within the structure and ideology of the system of parliamentary government and this framework is likely to influence crisis management decision making. However, it is most likely that bureaucratic perceptions about policy choices in the post-crisis stage will be affected by the form, mythology or perceived traditions of the parliamentary systems that crisis managers operate within.

These micro, meso and macro proposals form the analytical framework which guides the empirical chapters of this thesis. Each proposal is examined in detail across chapters five,

six and seven. Before this process begins, however, the empirical narrative of each case study is outlined so that the findings that follow have greater meaning.

Chapter Four

Case Study Narratives

Introduction

This chapter provides a brief synopsis of each case study. Where possible the causes and escalating factors which created each crisis are outlined. The specific authorities (policies, actors, organisations) and the 'events' that affected the management of each crisis are described, as are the post-event reforms which followed in their wake. Throughout each section reference is made to the political and operational dynamics which characterised, and ultimately defined, the historical importance of each crisis. The purpose of each narrative is to provide the context of each case study so that the findings which follow will have greater qualitative meaning.

4.1 The 2001 Foot and Mouth Epidemic

The Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) crisis began on 20 February 2001 when the first case was officially confirmed in an abattoir in Brentwood, Essex. The crisis effectively ended almost one year later on 15 January 2002 when the United Kingdom was officially declared disease-free. Across this timeline, 2030 UK farms were infected with the virus and 10,157 farms had livestock destroyed in an effort to control the spread of the disease (HC 888 2002: 169). A significant amount of political and economic damage can also be attributed to the epidemic between these two dates. The first post-war cancellation of a general election, the removal of a Minister, the reorganisation of a Whitehall Ministry, a ban on UK farm exports, a crisis response costing £3 billion (HC 487 2003: para.2), and the decimation of many rural businesses all followed the confirmation of that first infection in February 2001.

The disease was traced back to a farm in Northumberland where pigs were being fed untreated swill containing domestic and catering meat waste. It is believed that the swill

contained meat carrying the virus and that the meat had entered the UK illegally (HC 888 2002: 49). The farmers responsible for the pigs were charged with several contraventions of animal health and hygiene laws. However, the actual source of the virus, and how it entered the UK remain unknown (HC 888 2002: 49), which means that it is impossible to determine the 'root cause' of the epidemic.

However, what is clear is that a virulent 'Pan Asian O' strain of the virus was excreting from livestock before the first case was detected on 20 February 2001. Further examination of the pigs from the Northumberland farm confirmed that the disease may have been present 20 days prior to detection (EC FVO(a) 2001: 7). The fact that infected livestock had already travelled from Northumberland to Essex before the disease was detected meant that further outbreaks were inevitable. In these early days the disease spread primarily through cattle, pigs and sheep, in which FMD can incubate with little external signs, making clinical diagnosis difficult. According to the Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), over 2 million sheep movements could have occurred between the estimated time that the disease entered the country and the point when a national livestock movement ban was imposed (DEFRA 2001(a): 5). The fact that the disease was present in the livestock industry long before it was identified, the high frequency of animal movements across the United Kingdom, and the disease's transmission through sheep meant that that no response policy could have stopped further outbreaks from occurring.

The initial operational crisis response was controlled entirely by the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food (MAFF), and the State Veterinary Service (SVS), led respectively by Nick Brown, the Agriculture Minister and Jim Scudamore, the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO). On the 28 February the first case of FMD was confirmed in Wales. In 2001 animal health and disease control powers for Wales were still officially reserved to Westminster.

However, the Welsh Assembly Government's (WAG) Agriculture Department, led by Labour's Carwyn Jones, played a significant role in the formulation and implementation of response policies, which, although mandated officially by MAFF, were tailored specifically to Welsh circumstances by the WAG. On 1 March, the first Scottish case of FMD was recorded. Unlike Wales, animal health and disease control was a fully devolved competence, which meant that the Scottish Executive's Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD), led by the Liberal Democrat's Ross Finnie, had legal powers to formulate and implement its own disease control policy. The State Veterinary Service, however, remained a UK-wide body after devolution. The agriculture sections of each devolved executive, therefore, worked in conjunction with regional veterinary officers and veterinary teams who were principally accountable to the CVO in Whitehall.

The Ministry of Agriculture and the SVS have been heavily criticised for an initial crisis management response which increased the scale of the epidemic. One independent lesson-learning inquiry into FMD, for example, stated that the first month of the crisis, characterised by MAFF's failings, constituted, '31 days during which a serious veterinary problem became a national disaster' (HC 888 2002: 102). These early problems provide an important insight into the operations and politics of the FMD response.

Initially, 'Infected Area' restriction zones were placed around the primary outbreaks in Essex and Northumberland and around other 'Dangerous Contact' premises (businesses with livestock connections with the infected premises). These restrictions apply to humans and animals in a 10km radius surrounding a farm. Within this radius, human movement has to be regulated and livestock movement totally prohibited in order to stop transmission. The Brentwood abattoir pigs were slaughtered within 24 hours of diagnosis. By this point, however, the virus had already moved to neighbouring farms (HC 888 2002: 58). On 21

February 2001 exports of farm produce were banned. However, a national livestock movement ban was not imposed until 23 February when the whole of Great Britain became a 'Controlled Area', which meant that certain human activity in rural areas was restricted and animal movements prohibited (movement licenses were still issued that allowed animals to travel if the risk of transmission was minimal). The slow enactment of this policy was a major contributor to the scale of the epidemic (HC 888 2002: 52). One epidemiologist, a member of the FMD scientific advisory team attached to the crisis response, told the House of Commons Environment and Rural Affairs Committee that, 'if we had imposed a national movement ban on 20 February, three days earlier, our estimation is that the epidemic would have been between one third and one half of what it actually was' (HC 323 2002: q. 214). The purpose of establishing a Controlled Area is to halt livestock movement temporarily so that contact infections can be traced, diagnosed and then 'Infected Area' restrictions enforced in a smaller geographical space. Smaller restriction zones are preferable because the prohibition of livestock movements can cause animal welfare issues, reduces the value of stock and means that farmers cannot sell their produce. However, the scale of the epidemic, caused in part by the failure to impose a movement ban immediately, meant that the whole of Great Britain would remain a Controlled Area for nine months.

The principle disease control measure was a 24-hour cull policy, which demanded that all infected livestock be slaughtered within one day of diagnosis (enforced via Directive 90/423/EEC). However, the 24-hour policy was not implemented effectively, particularly during the initial stages of the epidemic. Up until 16 March, there was an average wait of 8.5 days between the clinical inspection and the slaughter of infected livestock (EC FVO 2001(a): 15). Across the whole epidemic, only one area managed to slaughter infected farms within 24-hours in more than 50% of cases (HC 888 2002: 172-173). According to a number of epidemiologists from the FMD scientific advisory team, 'if achieved from the

start of the epidemic, meeting the 24hr cull policy would have reduced the total epidemic size by more than 40% up to 16 July' (Ferguson *et al.* 2001: 542).

Problems in implementation were compounded by communication breakdowns between the SVS in the field, MAFF's regional centres and its headquarters in Whitehall. This meant that, 'those at the top responsible for major decisions were not provided with timely, accurate and relevant information about what was happening on the ground ... For the first two months of the outbreak - including the absolutely critical first two or three weeks - there was a serious deficiency in the reliability and completeness of the information available to those in charge' (HC 888 2002: 103). Moreover, cultural problems within MAFF were manifest. First, in an unwillingness to communicate bad news upwards to the Cabinet Office and out to the public. Throughout March and early April, the Minister and the CVO repeatedly stated through the media that the outbreaks were 'under control', while the Prime Minister and Cabinet Office officials were assured by the Minister that the crisis was being managed and that extra resources were not required (HC 888 2002: 104; Annex, 7 May, para.12). Second, MAFF's internal cultural weaknesses were symptomatic of a wider problem of departmentalism across Whitehall, which meant that the Ministry was unable to co-ordinate a 'joined-up' response to FMD and 'ramp up' resources across government (Rawnsley 2001: 468; HC 888 2002: 102; Richards and Smith 2002: 9).

These initial weaknesses changed the political climate surrounding the operational response. Solidarity gave way to an atmosphere of fault finding and blaming, particularly within the media, which continued throughout the acute stages of the crisis (McConnell and Stark 2002: 669-671). Support for MAFF and the SVS deteriorated rapidly and conflicts emerged between the Ministry and other departments. Indeed, the conflict between MAFF and the Department for Environment Transport and the Regions (DETR) has been used as a case

study in the early failure of New Labour's joined-up government project (Richards and Smith 2002: 9). This would appear to suggest that the FMD epidemic escalated not because of an interactively complex system of government but because the central policy departments were not interactive enough and suffered from 'departmental' cultures which inhibited a large scale crisis response. A number of non-governmental stakeholders, such as the National Farmers Union (NFU), were also drawn into conflicts as they challenged MAFF's interpretation and handling of the crisis (McConnell and Stark 2002: 667-677).

The late realisation within the Cabinet Office that the crisis response was failing led to the restructuring of the decision making process at the centre. From the 25 March, MAFF retained its lead agency status but became a vehicle for the implementation, rather than formulation, of response policy. From this point onwards, significant disease control decisions were taken within Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR) meetings, often chaired by the Prime Minister, which ensured that cross-departmental co-operation took place, that resources were 'ramped-up' across government and that decisions were informed by a scientific advisory team comprised of government and external experts (HC 888 2002: 102).

The first big decision taken in COBR was to implement a pre-emptive contiguous cull policy aimed at slaughtering undiagnosed livestock in order to 'get ahead' of the disease. The contiguous policy meant that all livestock on premises contiguous to an infection, even if apparently healthy, were culled. The target was to achieve this within 48 hours of diagnosis. Massive amounts of additional resources, including the deployment of the Army, were mobilised in an effort to implement the contiguous cull policy. Changes were also made to local decision making structures. The number of Local Disease Control Centres (LDCC's) increased and, crucially, Regional Operations Directors (ROD's) were created in the regions to take charge of the administration of the crisis response locally. This allowed the SVS to

concentrate solely on veterinary issues. These changes improved the effectiveness of the response. An inspectorate from the European Commission's Food and Veterinary Office reported after a visit in April that:

The organisation and operation of the FMD eradication programme has improved significantly ... Responsibilities are assigned to specific Ministers and Executive agencies in a planned, co-ordinated manner. Major policy decisions are taken at the highest level. The veterinary services now focus on the veterinary aspects of the programme ... The changes made, and the increased resources, have allowed a much more effective eradication campaign. ... The effectiveness of the campaign has been increased by quicker veterinary reaction times, pre-emptive culling, culling on contiguous premises and a significant reduction in the slaughter and disposal times. (EC FVO 2001 (b): 28-29)

However, it has been argued elsewhere that these improvements and the eventual control of the disease must be considered to be something of a pyrrhic victory - given the sheer number of healthy livestock which were culled in order to rectify the crisis response's early failures (McConnell and Stark 2002: 667). The last FMD epidemic in the UK occurred between 1967 and 1968, resulting in 2364 infections and the culling of 433,987 animals (Cmnd. 3999: 1969: 9). In contrast, the 2001 epidemic, despite infecting fewer farms, led to 6,456,000 animals being culled (HC 888 2002:169-170). The pre-emptive slaughter of healthy livestock, while effective at stopping FMD transmission, intensified the antagonistic political climate surrounding the crisis response by invigorating a public debate about the appropriateness of culling. Many stakeholders reacted angrily to the implementation of the pre-emptive culls and challenges were made to their legitimacy on legal, scientific, ethical and practical grounds (Guardian 4 March 2001; Telegraph 17 March 2001; CNN 20 March 2001; BBC 15 April 2001). One report, compiled by MAFF's Joint Co-ordination Centre (JCC) during the crisis stated that farming resistance to the new policies in one area had meant that only 3% of contiguous culls had been completed within 48 hours (EC FVO 2001(b): 13). Carcass disposal was also an issue which raised emotions within rural communities and slowed down the speed of the crisis response. Environmental and public

health concerns sparked protests and demonstrations across the country either because carcasses were burned in open fields or buried en masse in huge disposal sites near local areas. At one protest against a burial site in Eppynt Wales a local man was charged with the attempted murder of a police officer (BBC 1 April 2001).

On 27 March, the Government requested permission from the European Union to use vaccines in Cumbria and Devon, which were the main areas of infection. Over the next four weeks, the vaccination versus 'stamping out' debate intensified further. Reports in the media suggested that the Prime Minister, worried about negative public opinion, which might sway votes or even postpone the upcoming general election (scheduled to coincide with local elections on 3 May), favoured the use of vaccination. This position, according to the NFU and certain sections of the media, had more to do with cleaning up television screens ahead of a general election than disease control (Gill, B. NFU President, Interview, Dispatches, Channel Four, 3 July 2001). However, 'stamping out' remained the core response policy because the Agriculture Minister could not generate enough consent amongst the farming community, veterinarians, the food industry and consumers to implement a vaccination programme effectively (HC Debs., 26 April 2001, vol.367, col.457). Downing Street officials later briefed journalists that the Prime Minister was 'livid at what had happened' (Dispatches, Channel Four, 3 July 2001). The failure to force a strategy of vaccination was one reason why the local elections due to take place on 3 May were postponed. The 3rd of May, however, was understood to be a proxy date for the general election, which would not now take place until the 7 June 2001. Prior to April, the Prime Minister had publicly rejected the idea of delaying the elections with the justification that postponement of the democratic process would send out a message that the UK was quarantined and paralysed (Rawnsley 2001: 469). The number of new outbreaks continued to rise, however, despite the changes in the crisis response, peaking on the same day that

Blair announced that the 3 May elections were postponed (2 April). The cancellation of the election has been described as a 'historic and highly effective piece of agenda management' (McConnell and Stark 2002: 667), as it allowed Tony Blair to present himself as a strong crisis leader prepared to put the country's needs before those of his party, while allowing time for FMD to be removed from the agenda before electioneering began in earnest:

It is sometimes possible in politics to do something which is both decent and self-serving. The postponement of the election was that rare combination. The general verdict of the media and most of his own colleagues was that Blair had displayed a loss of nerve and taken a blundering risk ... They were all wrong: Blair was proved entirely right ... Tony Blair had demonstrated a better feeling for the national mood than either most of the media or the majority of his party. The gamble paid off. This was in large part because the government at last appeared to be winning its battle with foot and mouth. (Rawnsley 2001: 479)

In March, it also became apparent that the disease control policies had focused entirely on the needs of the farming industry without considering the damage that was being done to the tourism sector. Vivid images of slaughter and disposal and misperceptions about the risks that FMD posed to humans, combined to create an apocalyptic picture of Britain's countryside, which was, to some extent by the closure of agricultural Rights of Way and ministerial appeals for people to stay away from the countryside (HC 888 2002: 68). As the tourism slump became evident, the Prime Minister led a media campaign in conjunction with the DETR to assure tourists - particularly Americans - that the countryside was 'open for business - and for pleasure' (CNN 2001: 1). This public relations offensive was designed, according to the Environment Minister to counter, 'the grossly esoteric treatment of our country' in overseas media which was, 'scurrilous and mischievous in its inaccuracy, which is gross' (HC 363-ii, 2001: q.203). The confusion between MAFF's early message that the 'countryside was closed' and the DETR's 'open for business and pleasure' campaign became a widely used parable amongst critics of the government who argued that departmentalism had beset the crisis response.

On 25 April, Downing Street announced a relaxation of contiguous culling and movement restrictions. Later that week, the Agriculture Minister informed the Commons that local vets were to be given discretion to relax the implementation of contiguous culls and more discretion to issue movement licenses (HC Debs., 26 April 2001, vol. 367, col.457). During this period the media had turned its attention to Phoenix - a young calf found alive after the slaughter of one farm. Scenes of MAFF slaughter men attempting to gain access to Phoenix had stirred public opinion and a 'save Phoenix' campaign began in the media. The calf had become a symbol for those criticising the stamping out policy. The change in the control programme, which saved Phoenix's life, was leaked to the Daily Mirror and broadcast on the ten o'clock news before the parliamentary announcement, leading some journalists to question whether the decision was a 'knee-jerk' reaction to public opinion (BBC 25 April 2001; Observer 29 April 2001). On 3 May 2001, four days before election campaigning began; the Prime Minister announced that the country was, 'on the home straight' as the number of infections was dropping significantly (Blair 2001: 1). However, during May the relaxations to the control policy resulted in a small resurgence of outbreaks. Contiguous culling increased to its highest level during this period. This meant that as the number of official infections dropped, the number of farms having livestock killed actually increased in May (HC 888 2002: 129).

After the general election, MAFF and the Department of Environment Transport and the Regions were merged into the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). Nick Brown was removed from his post, replaced by Margaret Beckett and demoted out of the Cabinet to the position of Minister of Work within the Department of Work and Pensions. In 2003, Mr. Brown was removed completely from the executive after a Cabinet reshuffle and returned to the Commons backbenches. During August 2001, a series of independent inquiries into the crisis were announced. Dr. Iain Anderson was appointed by the Prime

Minister to chair a 'lessons to be learned' inquiry into the overall handling of the crisis. This inquiry published its report in July 2002 (HC 888 2002). The Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food published a report in January of 2002 that advocated a shift towards sustainable, environmental farming practices which would be less focused on product outputs and more focused on an integrated, transparent food chain. The Commission was appointed and endorsed by the Prime Minister and its findings underpinned DEFRA's first farming policy strategy (Cm. 5709 2002). The National Audit Office investigated the crisis response in relation to 'value for money' principles, with particular attention being given to the high level of compensation given to farmers (HC 939 2002: para.4.5), which the Public Accounts Committee later criticised extensively (HC 487 2003: 6). Finally, the Royal Society carried out two separate inquiries in England and Scotland on the scientific aspects of each response.

In Scotland, the last confirmed case of FMD was recorded on 30 May 2001. After the requisite three month monitoring period, Scotland was declared disease free on 11 September. In Wales, the last confirmed case was recorded on 12 August 2001 and disease free status was awarded on 4 December. The last confirmed case in England occurred on 30 September 2001, 221 days after the original outbreak. Three months after the last farm was culled, the whole of the UK was declared disease free. The 5th of February 2002, however, represents the end point of the crisis. Almost one year after the first outbreak, the EU's Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) lifted all remaining export restrictions on UK farm produce.

4.2 The Fuel Protests

The fuel protests began at the Stanlow refinery on the night of 7 September 2000, when approximately 150 farmers and hauliers blockaded the site's exit in protest over the high cost of fuel. Overnight, only one of the 60 scheduled fuel tankers crossed the picket line. The

apparent success of the Stanlow blockade encouraged further protests around the UK and by 11 September most of the country's oil refineries were effectively closed. Detailed assessments of the impact of the protests have concluded that they did not pose a significant threat to the population of Britain (Marsden and Beecroft 2002: 292), however, the impact of the protests in September 2000 created a palpable air of crisis. By 13 September widespread panic buying by motorists meant that 90 percent of petrol stations - reliant upon a cost-efficient 'just in time' delivery strategy - had run out of fuel; commuting via public transport had become difficult; 'essential user' fuel rationing was implemented; supermarkets had reported panic buying of groceries; schools began to close; and, according to the government at least, fuel shortages within the NHS had meant that 'lives were at risk' (BBC 13 September 2000).

The fuel protests must be understood as a political crisis in which the government and the protestors engaged in a symbolic-political conflict for public opinion. On one side, the protestors sought to project an image of honest, hard working small businessmen forced into engaging in (peaceful) direct action because of unfair levels of fuel taxation. On the other side, the government, faced with the first significant threat to its own legitimacy (Robinson 2003:423), attempted to redefine the protests as a physical, economic and political threat to the United Kingdom.

At least three factors can help explain the beginnings of the fuel protests (Robinson 2002: 60). First, between 1999 and 2000 the price of petrol rose dramatically. Global oil prices rose to a ten-year high in September 2000. In December 1998 the price of a barrel of crude oil was \$10 yet in September 2000 it was \$33. This increase, caused by rising global demand and reductions in OPEC levels of production, meant that the price of petrol increased by over 40 percent between January 1999 and June 2000 (Robinson 2002: 60).

The second short-term factor was the apparent success of fuel blockades in France, which ended on 9 September after the *gouvernement* made a number of fiscal concessions to the farming, haulage and fishing industries. According to Robinson (2002: 60), 'the tactics of the protestors in France (and their apparent success) were a crucial factor both in providing inspiration to the British protestors in the first place ... and in shaping the nature of the protests in the UK'. In the week before the Stanlow refinery was blocked, a series of meetings were held in Wales, primarily in St Asath and Ruthin, in which farmers had discussed ways in which they could protest against the high price of fuel. At one such meeting, an agreement was made to blockade the Stanlow refinery peacefully. Statements made by some of those involved in those meetings show that the farmer's deliberations were clearly influenced by the French protests. The leader of the Farming Union for Wales, for example stated that week that 'we admire what the French are doing, they have brought the government to pay. I hope this government will take note of what is happening in France rather than the same thing happening in this country' (BBC 7 September 2000) while one member of Farmers for Action told the media that they had planned to demonstrate at the Labour party conference but 'the French protests spurred us on' (BBC 11 September 2000). Finally, the protests gained a groundswell of support because of two interconnected perceptions. In 2000, government tax on petrol was levied at a higher rate than any other EU country (70 percent of the forecourt cost was tax). In the 1999/2000 budget, the Chancellor announced that the Treasury had enjoyed an unexpected surplus of £18.9 billion (Robinson 2002: 61). This created a belief amongst the protestors and the general public that the government was to blame for the high cost of fuel and that it could afford to make concessions on fuel duty. This perception, according to one former Environment Minister, was compounded by the failure of the government to properly champion the environmental rationale for high fuel prices (Michael Meacher, *Guardian*, 12 July 2002).

Robinson (2002: 61) also suggests one longer-term root cause (Blaikie *et al.* 1994:23) behind the fuel protests-the marginalisation of haulage and farming interests within the UK policy process over a ten year period. Significant changes occurred within transport and agricultural policy between 1990 and 2000. In the transport sector moves towards sustainability began with the publication of the 'Brundtland Report' in 1987. Over the next fifteen years transport policy under Conservative and Labour governments became characterised by a preference for strategies, institutional structures and organisations which catered for an environmental agenda (see for example, Cm. 3234 1996; Cm. 3950 1998). The implementation of a fuel tax 'escalator' in 1993 typified the wider shift in policy emphasis. Designed to raise the level of fuel duty by more than the rate of inflation, the escalator's purpose was to discourage car usage and promote more sustainable forms of transport. Between 1993 and 2000 (when the escalator was scrapped) successive chancellors increased the level of fuel duty and justified each increase using environmental rhetoric (Marsden 2002: 71). In his first budget Gordon Brown announced a 9.3 percent increase in fuel tax and stated that the escalator would rise by 6 percent in the future (Marsden 2002: 71). Although it has been argued that moves towards sustainability were never dramatic and that a genuinely 'green' transport policy has never been achieved (Rosen 2002: 36), the continued rise in fuel prices, the continued use of environmental rhetoric by ministers, and the transformation of the transport policy network has had significant consequences for those haulage interests who traditionally enjoyed a close relationship with Whitehall.

Accounts of the farming sector over the past fifteen years are remarkably similar. The relationship between MAFF and the larger farming interest groups in the latter half of the twentieth century has been described as clientelistic, symbiotic and exclusive (Robinson 2002: 61; Smith 1991: 237-241). Within this relationship representative groups such as the NFU were the beneficiaries of 'systematic luck', which was exchanged for their continued

support of MAFF (Dowding 1991: 154-157). However, the larger farming interests have not fared well over the past fifteen years. Reform of the Common Agriculture Policy, a series of food scandals and health crises which led to increasing debate over farm practices, the emergence of a sustainable farming strategy within government, the increase in organic farming and the GM crops debate have all been cited as reasons for the gradual marginalisation of 'traditional' farming interests from the policy process (Smith 1991: 236; Robinson 2002: 63). In both sectors, the increasingly perceived weaknesses of the larger representative groups encouraged some of their members to break away and form smaller, more extremist, 'outsider' groups such as Farmers for Action and the People's Fuel Lobby which were more prepared to take direct action. These groups adopted the same direct-action tactics that were being used with apparent success by the anti-road groups that opposed them. For example, in 1998, hauliers staged a 'go-slow' demonstration in central London. Lorries were driven at walking pace around Parliament Square and Whitehall for the duration of an adjournment debate on fuel duty taking place in the House of Commons. In July 2000 the Transport Sub-Committee of the House of Common's Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee published a report which recorded a 'vigorous campaign against what they [hauliers] perceived as unfair levels of taxation, particularly on fuel and Vehicle Excise Duty, which included attempts to disrupt the flow of traffic in cities and towns, and on motorways' (HC 296: 2000, para.1).

Initially, the protests were either underestimated (Lyons and Chaterjee 2002: xv) or deliberately ignored by the government (Robinson 2003: 426). In reality, the lack of any substantive crisis response was in part deliberate and in part caused by an under-appreciation of how quickly the fuel-transport supply chain could break down. Thus John Reid, the government's initial spokesman, stated on 10 September that the protests would be ignored because British people, 'do not react to the French way of doing things, which cause massive

disruptions and inconvenience to fellow citizens' (Guardian 11 September 2000); yet Andrew Smith, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, acknowledged after the crisis, that 'it was a number of days before the scale of the situation became apparent' (Lyons and Chatterjee 2002: xv). Some precautionary crisis management steps were taken in this initial stage. A meeting of the Cabinet's Civil Contingencies Committee (CCC) was arranged for the following Monday (11 September) and the Trade and Industry Secretary, Stephen Byers, also convened a meeting of the Privy Council for the same day to request emergency powers to secure future supplies of fuel should they be needed. Over that weekend, the cabinet publicised a 'business as usual' approach, typified by Tony Blair's e-commerce tour of the midlands where he reiterated a line of intractability, stating that, 'we cannot and we will not alter government policy on petrol through blockades and pickets. That's not the way to make policy in Britain and as far as I'm concerned it never will be' (BBC 11 September 2000). Over the weekend, however, the scale of the protests grew exponentially. A groundswell of public support bolstered the resolve of the protestors. Polls undertaken during the protests and in its immediate aftermath indicated that over 90% of the population supported their direct action (Robinson 2003: 434). Moreover, news of the apparent success of the Stanlow protests spread quickly and encouraged a number of other groups, largely unconnected to the Stanlow protestors, yet concerned about high fuel costs, either to join specific blockades or engage in their own forms of direct action across the country. This unplanned and almost instantaneous mobilisation of groups, which hitherto had little or no contact with each other, highlighted the pre-existence of a very loose and latent political network of potential protestors who began to connect through the Stanlow protest leaders (Doherty *et al.* 2003: 11).

The crisis response began in earnest on 11 September, after it became evident that the protests had grown over the weekend. The Prime Minister cancelled his e-commerce tour,

returned to London and took personal control of the management of the crisis. The crisis response that was implemented thereafter was predominantly political, consisting of 'a combination of political discourse aimed at influencing the public perception of the fuel crisis ... [and] formal and informal crisis-orientated committee structures designed to enhance understanding of the situation on the ground and place pressure on actors' (Robinson 2003: 425).

The reason for the government's approach is explained, to an extent, by the fact that this was a crisis involving direct action and 'outsider' tactics, which closed off the possibility of conventional forms of direct dialogue between government and protest leaders during the acute stages (Robinson 2003: 433). Forced to communicate with the protestors on a political-symbolic level, the government engaged in a strategy which sought to discredit the protestors and place pressure on the oil companies and the police to force oil through the blockades. Details of the Civil Contingencies Committee and Privy Council meetings were made public. A report compiled for the Committee which warned that the political, economic and social pressures were reaching breaking point, was given to the media. Details of the Privy Council meeting were also disclosed in a Downing Street press conference. Powers had been conferred, via the emergency provisions within the Energy Act (1976), which allowed the government to create a series of emergency orders for the control and supply of fuel for 'essential users' and emergency services. Oil companies had to designate and supply named petrol stations, which would provide these supplies. The implementation of these powers represents the only operational element to the management of the crisis. On 12 September, 60 tankers left depots in order to supply emergency services and on 13 September 280 tankers had left depots across the UK in order to replenish designated petrol stations (BBC 14 September 2000). Publicising the CCC and Privy Council meetings, according to Robinson (2003: 428), was a political strategy aimed, firstly,

at intensifying the pressure on the protestors by fostering a perception that the blockades were causing a severe crisis and, secondly, presenting a picture of a government 'in control', taking action to manage these disruptions to the best of its ability. This rhetoric intensified significantly from 12 September onwards. The Government began to portray the protests as a serious threat to lives because of fuel shortages in the NHS. Alan Milburn, the Health Secretary, stated that many hospitals had already had to cancel non-emergency operations and emphasised that supplies of medicine, blood and essential supplies were being disrupted (Robinson 2003: 423). One interviewee, a Labour MP who had a fuel blockade within his constituency, when asked about the rhetoric emanating from Downing Street during the protests, stated that:

The Government went on a major rebuttal. Alastair Campbell was very good at his job. He went out and he found the weaknesses in the country, he found the hospitals that were saying that they had problems with supplies and he made sure that was made public. (interview, Michael Connarty)

The Prime Minister, speaking to a Downing Street press conference, intimated that lives were at risk because of NHS shortages - an argument repeated by ministers within the devolved executives (BBC 13 September 2000; 14 September 2000; SPOR 13 September 2000, col.243). The protestors themselves were also vilified by the Government. Protest sites were portrayed by Jack Straw, for example, as scenes where violence was either evident or threatening and the protestors were defined as self-interested company owners, right-wing radicals and as threats to democracy (BBC 12 September 2000(a); 19 October 2000). The vilification of the protestors and the protest sites was complimented by another level of government discourse, which suggested that the protests were becoming unmanageable, primarily because the oil companies were colluding with the protestors. The argument, initially communicated through third parties such as trade unions and later by ministers themselves, was that the oil companies were not sending tankers across pickets because they

knew that the crisis would encourage increases in petrol demand (Robinson 2003: 428-429). The sense that the country was in a severe crisis deepened during this period. The public support for the protests which characterised the initial stages of the protest began to evaporate, as demonstrated by sections of the media and certain trade unions, which withdrew their support and condemned any continuation of the blockades (Guardian 14 September 2000; Robinson 2003: 429).

Aside from the symbolic rhetoric, Downing Street also began pressurising the oil companies to cross the blockades. This was done privately via a series of prime ministerial phone calls and publicly via members of the Cabinet claiming in the press that the oil companies were failing in their duty to distribute fuel (see for example, John Prescott, Guardian 19 September 2000). From 11 September onwards, the meetings of the five major oil companies involved in the dispute recorded significant government pressure, demanding the movement of fuel (Lyons and Chatterjee 2002: 54). In their defence, the oil companies argued that their tanker drivers, some of whom had been subjected to intimidation and threatened with violence, were unwilling to cross blockades and that the police had failed to guarantee their security at a number of sites. One-on-one communication between ministers and police chiefs ensued during which the police were told to force lorries through the blockades (Robinson 2003: 429). However, despite these demands the police remained reluctant to become involved in a political dispute in which the protestors appeared to enjoy public support. Police chiefs sought to justify publicly an operationally independent stance and the importance of policing by consent (Robinson 2003: 429), as encapsulated in a carefully balanced statement by Sir John Evans, then president of the Association of Chief Police Officers, who stated that the police had to 'respect both the right of individuals to protest while at the same time ensuring that industry and private citizens are allowed to go about their lawful business with a minimum of disruption' (BBC 12 September 2000 (b)).

As the protests began to be seen as a serious disruption, ad-hoc meetings with the police and the oil companies continued in Downing Street. Now confronted with a situation which had become defined, rightly or wrongly, as a serious threat, the police and the oil companies agreed to force tankers through the blockades. By Tuesday evening the police were directly involved at a number of picket sites, manning tanker cabs as they passed across pickets. The oil companies, from this point onwards, also began to engage in discussions with the tanker drivers unions and encouraged their drivers to cross picket lines. This again placed pressure on the protest leaders who, if they wished to continue, would have to manage direct confrontations between protestors and tanker drivers.

The Stanlow blockade ended suddenly at 5am on 14 September. Blockades around the country also dissipated over a period of 48 hours. The protestors, however, promised to return within 60 days unless the government made concessions to the price of fuel. No official inquiries were created to investigate the fuel crisis. The most probable explanation for this is that the political nature of the crisis did not lend itself to a rational 'lesson learning' process and that any inquiry would have to investigate the government's role in terms of causation and management. Despite its impact, very little attention has been devoted to understanding the crisis (less than a handful of academic studies are the exception here). This lack of attention is particularly strange in light of the policy reforms that stemmed from the fuel protests.

In the aftermath, Jack Straw moved quickly to convene a 'fuel taskforce' comprised of representatives from oil companies, police authorities, devolved executives and members of various Whitehall departments. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by all parties in which they agreed to perform specific roles which would maintain the supply of fuel in any repeat of the protests. This Memorandum was enforced by secondary legislation, which

legally obliged the oil companies to continue to supply fuel in the event of disruptions in the same way as gas, electricity and water companies must. In his pre-budget report, the Chancellor refused to reduce motor fuel duty significantly but did announce a series of concessions, which he stated were worth the equivalent of a 4p cut in duty per litre of fuel (HC Debs., 8 November 2000, vol. 356, col. 322-324). These concessions included a one year fuel duty freeze from April 2001, a lowering of the rate of road tax for lorries by an average of £715 per vehicle, and the introduction of a disc system taxing foreign hauliers for use of UK roads. The failure of the Home Office's Emergency Planning Unit to anticipate the crisis and to predict the scale of its consequences once it began was one rationale (alongside the FMD crisis) for the audit and reform of the governments crisis management machinery, which in turn led to the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and a significant increase in the sophistication of crisis management structures and resources.

4.3 The English Exam Crisis

In September 2002 following the publication of A-level results, the English exam assessment system became the subject of allegations made by Head Teacher Associations, individual students and the media. The principal accusation was that the 2002 grade boundaries had been fixed to ensure that the results from a newly introduced A-level qualification, Curriculum 2000, would match the 'legacy' results of the previous year. It was alleged that actual student performance had not been given priority when the grading process took place. Instead, political pressure to avoid 'dumbing down' or 'grade inflation' criticisms had filtered through the assessment system, resulting in the exam awarding bodies manipulating grade boundaries in order to maintain a consistent level of performance. The credibility and integrity of the 2002 results and the exam system were called into question, particularly in the printed press where it was reported that political interference had led to a situation whereby tens of thousands of pupils would have to have re-grades or re-sits (see for

example, *The Observer*, 1 September 2002; *The Independent* 28 September 2002).

Prompted by these criticisms, the Education and Skills Minister, Estelle Morris, announced an independent inquiry chaired by Mike Tomlinson, former Chief Inspector of Schools. Tomlinson's inquiry was conducted in two stages. First, an interim report was published in September 2002 which dealt with the immediate allegations. Ms Morris also requested that the arrangements for maintaining and judging A-level standards should be assessed. This became the main theme of a larger report published in December 2002. The interim Tomlinson Report, published on the 27 September indicated that a small amount of grades had been set inappropriately within one exam board. The Secretary of State forced the resignation of Sir William Stubbs, the Chairman of the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) - the regulator of the assessment system - 'to restore and maintain confidence in the examination system' (DfES 2002:1). However, following a much publicised row between the Minister and the Chairman, Estelle Morris also resigned on 23 October 2002.

The causes of the exam crisis are complicated and diffuse. Responsibility for the exam assessment system in 2002 was divided between a number of organisations. Three Awarding Bodies were responsible for sending papers to schools and colleges, organising external marking and awarding grade boundaries. Grade boundaries represent the minimum number of marks required for the awarding of a grade (A B C D E U) in each subject. Boundaries are set by awarding committees using samples of student work and statistical evidence comparing the previous year's performance with forecasts of the current year. They are then considered in a Grade Evaluation Meeting (GEM) and finalised by the Accounting Officer of each Awarding Body. A shared Code of Practice exists to ensure that within each organisation and within each subject a uniformed conversion of marks into

grades takes place. The three Awarding Bodies administering A level exams in 2002 were the Assessment and Qualification Alliance (AQA), Edexcel, and the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA (OCR) examination board.

The Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) oversees the exam assessment system. It has three primary duties. It advises the Minister and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) on policy; it assists in the implementation of qualifications policy; and, it regulates the assessment system. This involves accrediting courses and, importantly, monitoring the standard of marking and grading. It is the QCA that sets and maintains the Code of Practice for the conversion of marks into grades.

Finally, the DfES is responsible for the key policy decisions that affect the assessment system and its relationship with education and skills policy. The QCA and the Awarding Bodies are non-departmental public bodies (NDPB) accountable to the Minister and the Department. In a normal year, the DfES would have little involvement with the exam delivery system. However, the 2002 results were the first indication of how the Department's newly implemented A-level qualification (Curriculum 2000) was performing. In 2001, fifth year students had sat the first half of an optional two-tier A-level while sixth year students had completed the now defunct 'legacy' A-level. Those students continuing for a sixth year in 2002 would be the first to complete the A-level across two years and via two exams (AS and A2 levels). The root causes of the exam crisis have been traced to a number of problems within the assessment system.

First, a deep seated problem existed with the interpretation of what is meant by 'maintaining the standard' of exams. Perceptions of standards are inextricably linked to the number of students receiving grades. Maintaining the standard of an exam is often conflated

(mistakenly) with maintaining the number of students achieving specific grades. Because of this the process of maintaining an exam standard can be interpreted in two ways. It can be perceived negatively as an exercise to ensure that the numbers achieving grades remains relatively static. This would be achieved via the manipulation of grade boundaries with reference to statistical data taken from previous years in comparison with a sample of the current year's work. Alternatively, it can be understood positively as an exercise that ensures that the examination and assessment procedures (in the form of the Code of Practice) have been maintained to uphold the qualitative standard of previous years. These two interpretations blur during the actual assessment process because awarding bodies use statistical forecasting and qualitative assessments of actual scripts to set grade boundaries. This means that when awarding bodies are told to maintain a standard this could be interpreted as meaning either that the same number of grades must be awarded (by fixing grade boundaries via statistical forecasting) or that assessment procedures should maintain the same qualitative rigor as the previous year. There is general agreement, however, across the system that qualitative assessment of a sample of actual exams should be the largest influence in the boundary-setting process but the point to note is that the setting of grade boundaries is a subjective and judgemental process, which can never be replicated exactly across organisations. Nevertheless, the fact that no shared perspective existed between the QCA and the Awarding Bodies on what is meant by 'maintaining the standard' is one cause of the exam crisis (Tomlinson 2002a: Conclusions).

Second, long-term ambiguities existed in terms of the responsibilities, lines of accountability, and relationships within the assessment system. The scale of this problem can be appreciated through the final Tomlinson Report's recommendation that a Memorandum of Understanding be created to inject clarity into the system (Tomlinson 2002b: para. 86-95).

Third, a lack of a shared understanding of the standards associated with the new AS and A2 elements had existed throughout the education system since the introduction of Curriculum 2000 (Tomlinson 2002a: para. 14-15; HC 153 2003: para. 1). This problem was caused partly by the speed with which the new curriculum was introduced and a wider problem of continual reform in the education sector since 1997 (Tomlinson 2002a: para.18-19; Tomlinson 2002b: para.5; HC 153 2003; para.17). Standards were ambiguous because, first, schools had no exemplar material with which to train teachers about the standards expected of students in the 2002 exams (HC 153 2003; para.44). Second, markers had no practical experience or relevant exemplar scripts from pilot exercises to guide them through the grading process (Tomlinson 2002b: para.18).

The allegations of political interference from the DfES were refuted by Tomlinson who found no evidence of Ministers or officials offering guidance or placing pressure on those within the assessment system (Tomlinson 2002a: para.51). However, significant divergences in perception existed between the QCA and the Awarding Bodies in relation to maintaining the previous year's A-level standard. During a meeting between the QCA and the awarding bodies on the 12 March 2002, each body recorded that the QCA's Chairman had stated quite clearly that there was an expectation that the number of candidates with a given award should be similar to the 2001 figures. This 'worried' the boards because, 'their perception was that they were being asked to give more emphasis than perhaps was proper to statistical data and the need to have an overall outcome similar to the 2001 legacy A-levels' (Tomlinson 2002(b): para. 39).

The Joint Council for General Qualifications (a conglomerate of all three exam bodies and their Welsh and Northern Irish counterparts) wrote to the QCA on 19 April 2002 to state that the prime evidence for setting boundaries had to be actual samples of student's work. The

Chairman of the QCA replied in writing that he agreed with the Council, stating that 'this summer's A-level candidates can only be determined using a combination of professional judgments [of actual student performance] and statistical evidence' but also stated that 'in this situation, I do expect last year's A-level results to provide a very strong guide to this year's outcomes' (Tomlinson 2002a: para. 41).

A further meeting was called on 26 July because the Assessment Bodies had each realised that there would be higher levels of attainment in 2002 than the previous year. It was agreed that the changes in attainment were a result of the new structure of the qualification rather than a drop in the standard of the exam or the setting of boundaries. The QCA Chairman reiterated again that 'any increase in the numbers passing or any increase on those getting the higher grades had to be rooted in the evidence of what candidates did' (HC 153 2003: para. 51). The Chairman also indicated that, as the regulator of the assessment system, it might be necessary for the QCA to conduct an inquiry. If the number of students passing did rise, the QCA would have to determine whether or not the QCA's Code of Practice had been followed by each awarding body.

The first Tomlinson Report concluded that the requirements that the QCA Chairman placed on the boards 'were all proper and in line with regulatory responsibilities' (Tomlinson, 2002: Conclusions). However, the perceptions of the Awarding Bodies of the pressure they were under from the QCA diverged significantly. AQA leaders felt that the issue was clarified. Exam boundaries were to be set primarily on what the candidates did in the exams (HC 153 2003: para.54). The other two bodies, however, perceived the QCA Chairman's communications quite differently. Both the OCR and the Edexcel leaders felt that they were being placed under pressure to ensure that the number of pupils passing in 2002 was similar to the previous year (HC 153 2003: para.55; Tomlinson 2002a: para.42-48). This pressure

was communicated downwards to examiners. In more than one board, 'a perception was articulated by Chairs of Examiners during award meetings that there was pressure being brought to bear for the candidates results in their subjects to be close to those of the 2001 legacy A-levels' (Tomlinson 2002a: para.43). The interim Tomlinson inquiry received evidence from OCR Chairs of Examiners and scrutineers that they believed that in making their recommendations they were expected to have strong regard to the grade distributions that emerged from the previous year's A-levels, and that these recommendations were to result in a distribution close to the previous year's profile. In one case, this led to the resignation of a scrutineer. Senior OCR officials also amended the boundaries set by its Awarding Committees. In a significant number of subjects grade boundaries were raised during GEM meetings and then the OCR Accounting Officer raised more yet again after this stage. In many cases chief examiners were not made aware of these changes, which had the effect of depressing candidate grades with the main impact affecting the proportion of students passing at grade E, which had a knock on effect on the higher grades. These specific actions can be constituted as dynamic pressures which helped translate the root causes into the exam crisis. According to Mike Tomlinson, these actions 'arose from the pressure they [the awarding bodies] perceived that they were under from the QCA both to maintain the standard and achieve an outcome which was more or less in line with the results of 2001. These two demands are not compatible' (Tomlinson 2002a: Conclusions).

These problems, however, must be understood as small scale failures in the implementation of policy which were then constructed into something far more serious by the actions of various actors after the results became public. The political actions which followed publication of results must also be understood as dynamic pressures which exacerbated the sense of crisis. The crisis response during this period (September and October) was essentially political, largely reactive to public and professional pressures, and ultimately

escalated rather than controlled the crisis (McCaig 2002: 481). In the end only 1945 students received revised results out of 1,696,684 A-level entries across the UK (Tomlinson 2002a, para. 49). Although the problems affected a small number of students, the crisis of confidence was amplified by professional groups within the education system, by what the Education and Skills Committee described as 'lurid' media reporting (HC 153 2002: para. 78), and, by the public dispute and subsequent resignations of the Secretary of State and the sacking of the QCA Chairman.

After the original allegations surfaced the QCA attempted to defuse the situation by announcing its own internal review, which reported on 16 September. This inquiry, however, has been described as a political attempt to manage the crisis - to effectively attain 'closure' - rather than an exhaustive and rational fault-finding exercise (McCaig 2003: 481). The QCA, after only four days, exonerated the OCR (QCA 2002: 1) and referred to public confusion about the new qualification as a cause of the crisis (QCA 2002: 10). The suggestion within the report that nothing was wrong and that the allegations of fixing were based on misunderstandings of the new qualification intensified the crisis by angering teaching unions and professionals within the education system who had shared a different experience. These groups began to question the results publicly through the media after the QCA review (Guardian 22 September 2002). For example, on 17 September Edward Gould, Chairman of the Headmasters Conference, claimed the QCA 'co-ordinated' moves to depress student grades, and on the 18 September the Secondary Heads Association and the Girls School Association called for results to be reissued and a full independent inquiry (HC 153 2003: Appendix). The Tomlinson Inquiry was announced in reaction to these claims. This interim inquiry represents the second political attempt to manage the crisis. However, a political dispute between the QCA Chairman and Estelle Morris added a new dimension to the political side of the crisis and threatened to undermine the Tomlinson Report before it

was published a week later. The dispute between the QCA Chairman and the Minister related to actions taken by the DfES. Sir William Stubbs believed that the Secretary of State and her advisors 'buckled under pressure' placed on her by the media and intensified the gravity of the situation by calling for an immediate independent inquiry:

There was no crisis, the system had not failed overall and the perception was given that it had failed. I believe that was wrong and many young people were worried unnecessarily ... not only did they [DfES] buckle under pressure, they did not ask for evidence before they called the second independent inquiry...the Department did panic, they lost their nerve in the light of a storm of hostile press criticism. (Sir William Stubbs, HC 862-iii 2002: q.366)

The Chairman also believed that the integrity and independence of the Tomlinson inquiry was undermined because the Secretary of State had instructed her officials to contact the Awarding Bodies about possible re-grading options while the inquiry was ongoing without informing Tomlinson. According to the Chairman, this led Tomlinson to ask the Chief Executive of the QCA 'if he thought the inquiry was compromised and he should resign' (HC 862-iii 2002: q.364). The Secretary of State's decision to bypass the QCA and to discuss re-grading directly with the Awarding Bodies was perceived by Sir Stubbs as a sign that a political decision had been made to blame him and the QCA regardless of the content of the inquiry report. This belief, according to the Chairman, was reinforced by the actions of DfES media advisors who, between the 19 and the 25 September, 'were directly briefing the press that QCA was "dead in the water" and that by the end of the week I would be gone as Chairman' (HC 862-iii 2002: q.364). The Chairman decided to publicise his concerns through the media, which accentuated the sense that political motivations pervaded the assessment system and effectively ended his career (McCaig 2003: 484). The subsequent political row, the sacking of the QCA Chairman who went on to claim unfair dismissal and the resignation of Estelle Morris (24 October) all exacerbated the sense of an assessment system in crisis. The organisations involved suffered legitimacy fluctuations as negative

sentiments surfaced about their behaviour and performance. It is the damage done to the legitimacy of actors, organisations and systems that allows the label of crisis to be attached to these events. This was an archetypal 'contemporary' crisis, as discussed in chapter one. In effect, the politicisation of minor problems in an atmosphere of intense scrutiny developed into a crisis of confidence. There was no significant physical, economic or social threat from these events. Instead, they reflect Rosenthal and Kouzmin's (1997: 279) 'modern' definition of a crisis as they generated a threat to values, uncertainty and the need for urgent decisions.

Although the second Tomlinson Report advocated further reform of C2000, very little change was made to the qualification system after the exam crisis. The reason given for this by the DfES was straightforward. If the reform of the qualification was one cause of the exam crisis, as Tomlinson and the Education Committee suggested, attempting to resolve the problems with further reforms could lead to a repeat of the crisis. A period of stability and evaluation was required, not least because the resources that had been applied to the implementation of C2000 should not be wasted (HC 1026 2003: para. 3). Instead, reform took place within the assessment system. The Code of Practice for setting grade boundaries, for example, was revised, and a Memorandum of Understanding was introduced clarifying the roles of each organisation and the standards for AS and A2 were defined more rigorously. The exam crisis has not been repeated. However, what Tomlinson described as the 'annual August frenzy' (HC 153 2003: para.75-77) surrounding exam results each year continues.

4.4 The Scottish Exam Crisis

On 9 August 2000, the day before pupils in Scotland were due to receive their exam results, Ron Tuck, the Chief Executive of the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), announced that around 1400 candidates would receive incomplete certificates because results

information had gone missing within the SQA's information systems. Over a two week period a number of serious problems, relating to the assessment and certification of results, became public and undermined public confidence in the exam system. In the end, 16,478 pupils received inaccurate or incomplete course results in the 2000 diet (SP Paper 234 2000: para.2). During August and December, a tense political atmosphere developed around the SQA and the Scottish Executive, characterised by intense media speculation, political calls for ministerial resignations and bureaucratic reform, and a sense of uncertainty about the true extent of the exam problems.

The causes of the Scottish exam crisis are remarkably similar to the English crisis in that broader reforms within the education system, including the introduction of new qualifications, exposed significant problems within the exam assessment system, which then escalated into a political crisis. The Scottish and English exam crisis, however, are distinguishable because the Scottish problems were primarily caused by organisational failures within the SQA rather than grade manipulation.

Between 1994 and 1999, Scottish higher education changed drastically. In 1994, following the publication of the Howie Committee Report on Scottish higher education (SOED 1992), the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department formulated a series of qualifications for Scottish schools under the title Higher Still. The introduction of the Higher Still reforms was delayed twice but finally began to be implemented in August 1999. By 2000, 80% of Higher Still courses had been introduced in secondary schools across Scotland.

The new exams also required a new system of assessment and certification. In 1996, the SQA was established as a NDPB by the Education (Scotland) Act in order to homogenise the assessment system. In 1997, the Scottish Examination Board and the Scottish Vocational

Educational Council, the two bodies responsible for high school and further education qualifications, were brought under the auspices of the SQA and wound up. The SQA alone was now responsible for devising qualifications, determining grade boundaries and entitlements, recording and issuing awards, and approving educational providers for the whole of Scotland. Assessment of the new Higher Still qualifications followed a more complex system, which merged 'academic' and 'vocational' requirements and required a mixture of oral, written, practical and exam testing to determine five core skills in each subject. Certification of the new qualifications was also reformed. From 2000 onwards candidates were to receive all qualification results in one complete certificate.

The governance 'above' the assessment system also changed radically as a result of devolution. Oversight transferred from the Scottish Office to two new Scottish Executive departments. The SQA was primarily 'sponsored' by the Enterprise and Life-long Learning Department (SEELLD), which in 2000 was headed by Henry Mcleish. However, the SQA was also responsible to the Minister for Children and Education, Sam Galbraith, and the Scottish Executive's Education Department (SEED) for school-based qualifications.

The 2000 diet results provided the first opportunity to evaluate the performance of Higher Still. However, it quickly became apparent that significant managerial and organisational weaknesses within the SQA, combined with the extra workload caused by Higher Still, meant that the delivery of the new certificates had not happened effectively. Three particular organisational failings have been cited as causing the crisis (SP Paper 234 2000; para. 80-264). First, insufficient staff were employed to input the data required for the new certificates, which required far more input than the previous system because of the structure of the new qualification. Second, additional exam markers had not been employed in recognition of the increased complexities involved in awarding marks for Higher Still.

Third, new software designed to process and evaluate the new qualifications was implemented slowly and imperfectly, resulting in further delays in certification, inaccurate or incomplete management information and the entry of inaccurate candidate data.

The acute crisis response of the Scottish Executive was in part planned. On 9 August, Ron Tuck, announced that 1400 certificates were flawed. On the same day, Sam Galbraith immediately stated that this figure was unacceptable in the light of assurances he had been given that the exams diet would be implemented with a minimal number of problems. The Minister announced that an independent internal review of the problems would be conducted, that affected pupils would not suffer as a result of the SQA issues, and that reforms would take place to stop any repetitions of the problems in 2001 (SP OR 6 September 2000, Vol.8, No.1, Col.21). The inquiry was contracted out to a private management consultancy, Deloitte and Touche, which was given a limited remit to investigate the short term managerial issues that caused the failures in the delivery system. The announcement of the inquiry and the communication of reassurance was part of a response which was planned and prepared before the announcement of the 2000 results. The Executive had been aware of the likelihood of problems with a small number of candidates certificates and had made contingency plans. The quick inquiry announcement was designed, like the QCA review, to 'draw a line in the sand' and to define the problems as a 'one-off' management failure that would not be repeated (McCaig 2003: 473). Thereafter, events 'which were unforeseen' began to unfold and exacerbate the sense of crisis. Pre-planned crisis management became impossible as the Executive was forced to react contingently as more organisational problems within the SQA emerged and the crisis began to be framed in different ways by a number of politically motivated actors.

The initial estimate of 1400 incomplete certificates due to missing data proved to be

conservative. On 18 August, the SQA announced that information was missing for 5000 (5 percent) of candidates. Missing data also turned out to be only one of a series of problems. Many candidates had not received their certificate in the first instance. It later emerged that around 2000 certificates had been left, forgotten, in a mailroom and that certificates which had been checked at the last minute had not been issued either (SP Paper 234 2000: para.40). Moreover, on 12 August the SQA conceded that it was also re-checking 147,000 issued Higher, Intermediate and Standard grades for accuracy (SPICE 2000: 2). Higher education groups, such as the Committee for Higher Education Principals, alongside sections of the media began to question the credibility of all the 2000 diet results (SPICE 2000: 2; BBC 14 September 2000). The emerging crisis of confidence deepened with the resignation of the SQA's Chief Executive the same day, which came with an admission that the extent of the problems had still not been ascertained (SPICE 2000: 2). By the 17 August it emerged that 18,232 incomplete or inaccurate certificates had been issued, affecting 16,748 pupils (SP Paper 234 2000: para.2). Over the following weeks and months a number of senior SQA officials, including all the members of the management board and the Chairman either resigned or were encouraged to stand down by the Scottish Executive.

During this period, the crisis was politicised significantly after it emerged that the Scottish Executive had been communicating frequently with the SQA that summer, that SEED had become aware of a number of potential problems within the SQA, and that it had been actively working to resolve a number of those problems. In the months leading up to the publication of results, the relationship between the Executive and the SQA had changed. Up until this point, the SQA had maintained an existence which was largely independent from the Executive - representatives of the two organisations tended to meet less than a handful of times in a year and always via pre-arranged, structured meetings. However, over the summer of 2000 SEED and the Minister increased their oversight of the NDPB, formal and

informal lines of communication were augmented, and SEED became increasingly interventionist in the operations of the SQA. According to the Minister, SQA repeatedly assured the Executive that the diet would be implemented smoothly (SP OR 6 September 2000, Vol. 8, No.1, Col. 21). However, despite these assurances, the Executive found on 26 June that the SQA had not allocated a number of scripts to markers and that internal assessment data was missing. What happened thereafter was described by the Head of SEED as 'intervention of a sort in that it bore no relation to the normal relationship between a non-departmental public body and the department' (ECSC OR, 27 September Col.1434), while the Education Committee noted that 'the Executive considered that the advice offered and the thought given to the problems faced by SQA was on a completely abnormal scale' (SP Paper 234 2000: para. 279). Continual contact between the two bodies continued between June and August. During this period, Sam Galbraith and SEED officials are recorded as having offered the SQA assistance in a number of areas (IT Support and marker recruitment for example). Most of these offers were refused by the SQA which continued to assert its independence and assure the Executive that, although some problems existed, the publication of results would not be badly affected (SP Paper 234 2000: para's.276-289).

The publication of the Executive's role pre-crisis is significant because it re-defined the crisis and intensified the political drama in the acute and post-crisis stages. Up until this point the crisis was construed in simple terms as a straightforward case of organisational failure within a NDPB. However, the realisation that the Scottish Executive was aware of some issues that summer and had intervened in the management of the NDPB raised the political stakes because it meant that ministers could, potentially, be held culpable. An extremely vitriolic public conflict ensued between August and December about the appropriateness of Sam Galbraith's and SEED's actions in the run-up to the exam delivery. Opposition parties and sections of the media claimed Galbraith and his Department were

partly responsible for the crisis because their interventions had failed to diagnose the extent of the SQA's problems and to mitigate the problems that they were aware of. These criticisms were rebutted by the Minister who emphasised the independence of the SQA from the Executive, claiming initially that, 'the role of ministers is to accept responsibility for policy; day to day running of the organisation is not our responsibility' (ECSC OR 30 October 2000, Col.1816) and that he had, 'absolutely no powers to instruct the SQA to do anything. After consultation, the Executive can give it [SQA] directions in matters relating to the carrying out of its function as laid out in statute, but we have no powers other than that' (SP OR 6 September Vol.8, No.1, Col.31). This defence was ill-advised because, as the SNP pointed out to the Minister during one question time in the Scottish Parliament, Section 9 (I) of the Education (Scotland) Act clearly states that, 'The Secretary of State may, after consultation with SQA, give SQA directions of a general or specific character with regard to the discharge of its functions and it shall be the duty of the SQA to comply with such directions'. The Minister did have the power to intervene directly. Indeed, the evidence from that summer contradicted any notion that the SQA's operations were fully independent from SEED. An 'abnormal' and 'interventionist' relationship had already developed between the two bodies that summer. The allegation remained that the Minister had not done enough to prevent or mitigate the crisis. In response, Section 9 (I) was described by the Minister as a 'nuclear option', which, given the assurances he had received from the SQA, was not considered necessary (ELLC OR, 4 October 2000, Col. 1201). Again, the Minister returned to the SQA's NDPB status by claiming that, 'there is a difference between responsibility and culpability; if we had received information that would have led me to utilise my nuclear options powers, there would have been an issue of culpability' (ECSC OR 30 October 2000, Col.1816). This was the first time that this kind of argument had been expressed in the Scottish Parliament. The claim that ministers should not be held responsible for the operations of a NDPB had been used frequently in Westminster and

Whitehall and had already become the subject of political and academic criticism. Such criticism indicated that the contemporary practice of disowning 'quango' responsibility had inverted the doctrine of ministerial responsibility even further (Flinders and Smith 1999: 202-205; Clarence 2002: 793-795). However, the Scottish Parliament was designed to usher in a new form of politics which was radically different from Westminster, a system 'where Westminster's malpractice and deficiencies were to be consciously excised and a new, more accountable system was to be introduced' (Clarence 2002: 792). The embryonic status of the Scottish Parliament and its idealistic principles, to an extent, helps to explain why Galbraith's arguments created such anger within the new Scottish polity. The exam crisis from this point onwards was no longer simply about the SQA's organisational capabilities and the ineffective provision of exam results. It was framed instead as an important test of Scotland's 'new politics', the doctrine of ministerial responsibility, and the transparency of 'quango' governance post-devolution.

On 6 September, the Scottish Parliament reconvened after the summer recess. Two of the Parliament's Committees - the Education, Culture and Sport Committee (ECSC) and the Enterprise and Life-long Learning Committee (ELLC) - immediately announced inquiries into the crisis. The terms of reference of each committee inquiry clearly reflected the public debate about causation. The ECSC focused specifically on the acute organisational failures within the SQA while the ELLC examined the governance of the SQA by the Executive. Ministers and officials were cleared of any direct blame by the ELLC, which found that 'there was no evidence to back claims that they had neglected their responsibilities', however, despite finding that 'the pattern of governance was not the primary factor in creating the problems in the SQA', the Committee did state that 'the governance arrangements still failed to identify or prevent the crisis from happening' (SP Paper 232 2000: para. 70). The ECSC also concluded that inadequate organisational processes and

weak management within the SQA were the primary causes of the crisis. However, ministers and officials were again criticised for accepting the SQA's self diagnoses and because their interventions failed to prevent the crisis (SP Paper 234 2000: para. 284-300). The ECSC report also contained a number of minority recommendations, which divided the Committee. These were proposed by Mike Russell, a SNP MSP, and accused Sam Galbraith of complacency and suggested that the Minister resign (SP 234 2000:para 301V-301I). On 26 October, Henry McLeish became Scotland's First Minister following the death of Donald Dewar. In the cabinet reshuffle that followed, Sam Galbraith became the Environment Minister and was replaced as Education Secretary by Jack McConnell. However, after the publication of the Committee inquiries, a motion of no confidence in Sam Galbraith, tabled by the SNP and supported by the Scottish Conservatives, was debated in the Parliament. Although the Executive defeated the motion, the debate ensured that political pressure on the Minister continued. On 20 March 2001, Sam Galbraith resigned from his ministerial post and left the Scottish Parliament, citing health reasons for his departure. In 2002, the Scottish Parliament approved the SQA Act, which restructured the SQA and implemented a more stringent series of performance indicators and oversight processes through which the NDPB would be monitored by SEED and the Scottish Parliament. The 2002 Higher Still diet was implemented smoothly.

The purpose of this chapter was to provide the context of each case study in order to enrich the findings which follow. With this task complete, the remainder of the thesis applies the analytical framework to each case in order to define the ways in which representative assemblies contributed to the management of the crises. The findings are structured around the micro, meso and macro levels outlined in chapter three. Chapter five begins with the micro-level functions, examining constituency roles performed by individual representatives. Chapter six moves on to analyse meso-level functions performed at the institutional level by

collectivities within each representative assembly and, finally, chapter seven concludes by examining macro-level or systemic level functions.

Chapter Five

Micro (Individual) Level Functions

Introduction

The constituency roles performed by individual representatives during the four crises are examined below. The chapter sets out the theoretical propositions relating to constituency roles, summarises the findings as a whole and then examines the specific proposals relating to each function in detail. If a specific proposal generated a large amount of interviewee data, the findings of that section are separated by case study and by representative assembly.

Theoretical Propositions

In chapter three it was stated that the constituency roles that parliamentarians perform might be salient to the management of crises. The potential importance of these roles, it was argued, rests upon the fact that communication is an intrinsic element of territorial representation and crisis management, which means that representatives could connect (or disconnect) government crisis responses to affected constituents. Chapter three contended, after a review of parliamentary and crisis management research that constituency roles could enhance the operational dimensions of a crisis response and the levels of local support that crisis authorities receive (Bulpitt 1983; Wood 1991; Grumm 1975; Pakenham 1990; Boin *et al.* 2005).

These potential effects were broken down into more precise propositions. First, periphery-to-centre communications could improve government 'horizon scanning' aimed at identifying emerging problems before they manifest as acute crises. Second, representatives could perform an 'errand running' function during crises by communicating between affected constituents and crisis response structures. Following on from the above,

parliamentary members could provide 'feedback' to crisis managers about the ongoing effects of their policies. Fourth, parliamentarians could have the potential to 'free up' crisis managers from unhelpful forms of communication. This role could be performed in two ways. Representatives could act as 'lightning rods' which absorb local emotions or, because of their position as 'gatekeepers' between government and constituents, filter out local demands which are unnecessary or repetitive before they communicate them onwards to officials. Fifth, elected representatives could have the potential to mobilise local consent (or dissent) towards crisis authorities operating within their constituencies.

Research Findings

A total of 39 interviewees, parliamentary members and civil servants, were interviewed about the involvement of the UK Parliament, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly in the case-study crises. A total of 33 interviewees provided evidence to support the supposition that constituency roles can be important to the management of crises. Constituency roles reveal the first inter-institutional theme as they were performed by UK, Scottish and Welsh representatives. However, there is diversity across the case studies. The majority of parliamentarians did not perform specific constituency duties during the fuel protests, although representatives who had fuel blockades in their constituencies were extremely busy performing a number of roles. It is also apparent that a small number of parliamentarians had a large number of constituency issues to deal with in relation to the exam crises but that other representatives and officials defined their constituency related workload as minimal. The Foot and Mouth epidemic is different to the other two cases because it does provide a definite pattern of constituency involvement. All the FMD interviewees stressed that parliamentarians were actively involved and important to the management of that crisis.

5.1 Parliamentarians as ‘Errand Runners’ and ‘Feedback’ Mechanisms

Foot and Mouth

Four out of five of the MPs interviewed stressed that they communicated information between constituents and crisis managers and that this was important to the disease’s control in their area (interviews, Lembit Opik, David Curry, Mark Todd, Owen Paterson). All the interviewed DEFRA officials corroborated these statements and suggested that civil servant-MP relationships during the crisis were ‘extraordinary’ in nature (interviews, UK Officials, C, D H). For example, the former Chairman of the Agriculture Select Committee represented a constituency that was heavily affected by FMD. As far as he was concerned, his ability to act as a conduit for information between MAFF and farmers was the most important of all his ‘pastoral duties’ during the crisis (interview, David Curry). Mr. Curry’s contacts within MAFF, cultivated during his time as a minister and as a committee chairman, meant that he was often successful in communicating issues to Government and feeding reliable information back to affected farmers:

I increasingly became the person who was trying to find out what was happening. I was the one trying to actually say to farmers, “this is what’s going to happen, this is what happens next” and I found myself on the blower every night phoning up farmers saying “are you OK, have you got any problems, do you know what’s happening?” ... I certainly felt that the main thing people wanted was reliable information in the sense that there was somebody saying “if you’ve got a problem here I am, I’ll do whatever I can, don’t hesitate, I’ve got the office set up to hear people’s concerns” and I think that was reassuring to people and I think that in a sense it probably helped the Government as well to have an MP who was not in the business of making political capital out of it so close to an election, as the situation spoke for itself. I was just trying to do my pastoral duty. ... When farmers ring up to get advice the phone is answered, they don’t have to ring again and then ring off, they don’t get an answer phone message, somebody answers the phone, it’s not like the Child Support Agency, somebody actually answers the phone and says “this is what you should do” or “I will ring you back with that information within one hour” so that you build confidence. I was doing that. I was able to get through and, quite frankly, I was able to get doors open that they couldn’t get open. A huge amount of my work was spent trying to get explanations or revisions of the mechanics of the control programme. (interview, David Curry)

Lembit Opik MP also performed a communication role between constituents and civil servants. He corroborated David Curry's argument that constituency duties reassured those affected locally:

The biggest advantage that local people had was that their local constituency MP was active. That's more important and relevant than anything else really because it gives people a direct localised feeling of being supported. Parliaments are too far away from those people. (interview, Lembit Opik)

However, in contrast to David Curry, Mr. Opik's experience of the provision of information by the Government was not positive. The MP surmised, 'that the information I was being expected to transmit back to my constituency was guesswork'. (interview, Lembit Opik). Owen Paterson represented North Shropshire, another area that was affected by the disease. Mr. Paterson's private records (made available to the author) from that period provide a fascinating insight into the frequency and nature of his role as a communication conduit. The volume of correspondence from constituents during that period was considerable. The documents record requests for assistance from constituents and, importantly, replies from local and central members of MAFF, including the Minister's Private Office, in relation to blood testing results, welfare issues, Intervention Board inquiries, movement licenses, requests for contact telephone numbers, financial support inquires, and concerns about disposal sites. Owen Paterson, like Lembit Opik, was also frustrated by what he described as MAFF's inability to provide clear information (interview, Owen Paterson).

Central and regional DEFRA officials confirmed that MPs, acting as conduits, were often helpful to the management of the crisis and also that the amount of direct communication between civil servants and elected representatives was 'extraordinary' (interviews, UK Officials, C, D, H). One of these interviewees had a leading role in the Ministry's Joint Co-ordination Centre (JCC) during the epidemic and dealt directly with

MPs on a frequent basis. This official recalled that direct one-to-one communication with MPs, as opposed to the normal procedure of working through ministerial offices, was beneficial because it shortened the line of communication between the Department and farmers (interview, UK Official C). According to the same official, Local Disease Control Centres (LDCC's) were also in constant dialogue with MPs; and the staff of LDCCs who contacted the Co-ordination Centre were 'overwhelmingly complimentary' about those MPs in this regard, 'because, after all, there was a sense of; we're all in this together, we all have the same aims here' (interview, UK Official C). Another senior civil servant in control of a regional response recalled:

We [the local MP and I] discussed what was going on. That became part of a much more regular element not least because x District Council, with quite a lot of foresight, had set up a local group which included the local MPs and I attended that ... There was no regular methodology, MPs would phone up if and when. I had interaction with other MPs in the area, met with, I think, eventually all of the ones at different stages that had significant numbers of outbreaks partly as a result of ministerial visits. During five months I had six or seven ministerial visits and one prime ministerial visit and often part of that was meeting the local MP and the minister in a private meeting. (interview, UK Official H)

Asked whether MPs were communicating on specific issues and whether meetings were scheduled to communicate issues back to them, the same official replied:

Yes, indeed. The other issue was that we were in the middle of a general election ... my view is that the whole way we deal with MPs and indeed local politicians has changed because of Foot and Mouth because when the election, as in most elections, was called we got a missive from the centre saying you are effectively going into purdah, you must not engage in any interactions. That lasted about two days. It was clearly untenable in terms of Foot and Mouth. We had to keep talking to everybody so it was effectively abandoned. Because of that senior civil servants like myself were talking to MPs without private offices getting involved. The usual process in the civil service is that if an MP wants to talk to a civil servant they go through the minister's private offices who can apply political guidance or say get on with it. We were given free reign ... It was unusual even on a day-to-day basis. It was very unusual in the middle of a general election. We literally operated as if there wasn't a general election going on. (interview, UK Official H)

The contributions from Wales were similar to the ones provided in England. For example, the ARDC Chair stated:

I was acting as a sort of conduit, as a kind of central point, and I experienced the frustration of getting a different answer, I mean sometimes DEFRA would give you one answer, the office in Cardiff would give you an answer and the local office would give you an answer and those answers were different. (interview, Glyn Davies).

Senior officials also confirmed that AMs served as two-way communication conduits:

I spent an awful lot of time on the phone to local Assembly Members who were very accessible to their local communities and many of them were farmers themselves or from farming families, who were out in their constituencies listening to the concerns of local farmers and local businessmen and constantly getting in touch with me or the Minister via various assembly channels ... that's what they did and that happened from February through to July. (interview, WAG Official C)

A second official also explained that, 'it helped to use them as another conduit to get information out and in particular contact details, "look farmer Joe you've come in to my constituency, the person you need to talk to is, and here is the phone number"; it was about using them to get information out' (interview, WAG Official B). The quote below presents a picture of WAG officials using Assembly Members as a barometer for policy feedback, while simultaneously legitimising their own actions:

There were times when it [the Assembly] did help both in terms of, as it were, almost legitimising what you were doing but also in terms of having a *sounding board* ... I can recall times when we went to the Assembly meetings extremely confident about what we were doing and we were able to explain what we were doing and why we were doing it and what the potential implications and impact were and getting a positive response from the parliamentary system, either the Committee or the plenary, and that gave you confidence in taking it forward. There were instances like that but there were also instances where you came out feeling pretty bruised and battered ... it's a *barometer that you know is pretty bloody close to the real world out there*. *They're very close to their constituents*, they're very switched on to industry related matters. You're not going to be able to pull the wool over their eyes about the possible implications

of what you're suggesting because they are very close to people and they would have had discussions with lobby groups and stakeholders. So they were pretty reliable. (interview, WAG Official C, emphasis added)

According to another official, the 'errand runner' role performed by AMs helped to generate support for the Welsh Assembly as a whole. The effective management of a constituent's concerns, it was argued, generated support for the representative assembly.

As one official noted:

The guy complains to his AM, the AM speaks to me, I speak to the farmer. From me the farmer understands what the scenario is, but it's also getting the message through to that farmer that the Assembly itself works and is good for Wales and the AM comes out of it quite well. (interview, WAG Official B)

After describing an example of an AM contacting him regarding a specific constituent problem, which was resolved effectively, the same official went on:

That was one case, and that guy, I got a phone call from that guy saying I had made his day but what I felt about it was the fact that the communication his wife had used to the AM, to me, and that I was able to get back to him and it worked. There's one individual that has gone away thinking the Welsh Assembly is the best thing since sliced bread. (interview, WAG Official B)

As would be expected, the errand running function was also described as important by MSPs and members of SEERAD. Alex Fergusson and Elaine Murray, both described this role as the most important function that they performed:

Actually I have never felt as needed as an MSP before or since. I was a regional MSP at the time, I'm now a constituency MSP but I had a farming background and I found that the Minister was a very willing listener. I think because of that farming background and because I lived in the area his door was mostly open to me all the time and that was very useful because you could bypass the normal ghastly slow parliamentary protocols when you were bringing something to the attention of the Minister and that happened on many occasions and I welcomed that open door, it was very useful. ... We were also in touch with the 'bunker' [the LDCC] on a weekly basis, if not daily by telephone, we went once a week. The senior vet was in constant touch with us and briefing us on what was

happening and again answering our questions ... there was a lot of communication, there was a huge amount of contact. ... I've never felt so justified in being an MSP. Sometimes you feel totally redundant and sort of impotent in your inability to do things. In this instance we actually could do things and did. I know for a fact that towards the end just by intervening we managed to stop a number of culls that would have taken place otherwise ... Yes, it was necessary to have, not just me, but people like me in the area working at the time and I think it probably was beneficial to the flow of communication and information, particularly to those who were most intimately involved, the farmers themselves. (interview, Alex Fergusson)

Elaine Murray also communicated with SEERAD ministers and officials. She too explained that she had an unprecedented degree of access to crisis leaders. Mrs. Murray stated that she, 'had access to his [the Minister's] private secretary and so on which normally a minister wouldn't do under normal circumstances and that was unusual ... I could contact the Minister directly and also one of the senior civil servants made himself directly accessible'(interview, Elaine Murray). SEERAD officials also recognised that the MSPs and MPs who represented Dumfries and Galloway performed errand running functions. One SEERAD official, for example, stated:

I would often have MSPs popping into the office saying "I've got this farmer here, he's got rare breeds of sheep, can he be exempt from slaughter?" that kind of issue and that can be dealt with locally. It was more localised, it was mainly constituency issues. They weren't really communicating about the disease strategy at all. They would come in about particular problems that the farmers had. Obviously there was a big process, the animals get slaughtered, then disposed of and the farms get disinfected and sometimes the disinfection process would get damaged, there would be worries about compensation, so you get these kind of direct personal issues largely. They [MSPs] would come in quite frequently and say "how is it going?" and it was always the same question "are we winning?" and you would tell them that we were making progress and what we were going to do. (interview, SE Official B)

One member of the Scottish Executive Civil Contingencies Division also explained that local councillors, MSPs and MPs are beginning to be incorporated into official contingency plans:

There is a clear role for elected representatives and I don't think that you can ignore local elected representatives. In many ways they can be more important

as they may be a well-known face in their community, so if we're having something awful happening I think it's very important for the local responders to make sure that the local elected representatives are fully up to speed and are able to offer advice to their communities and I think that is an important function during the crisis itself. I think one of the things that there has been a lot of concentration on is how we can improve media handling and that is not a question of putting a spin on a local event it is much more driven by a desire to make sure that the public have information which is useful to them. I think what has now been recognised is that you also have to be able to communicate directly with the public rather than simply through the media as the communication may have to be two-way, so there is an important role for local, elected representatives [councillors] for that direct communication and MSPs and MPs are in a similar position and again I think it's a pretty early priority for local responders to talk to all of those. (interview, SE Official D)

The Fuel Crisis

Two interviewed MPs, who both had fuel blockades within their constituencies, claimed that they acted as conduits of information during the fuel crisis (interviews, Andrew Miller, Michael Connarty). What is interesting about these two examples is the manner in which each MP communicated between the protest sites and the Government. Michael Connarty stated that acting as a conduit of information between centre and periphery is :

Always something that you do and there are a number of mechanisms which you can use to do this when your party is in government ... So, for example, the Treasury Backbench Committee of which I'm a member. We get the Chancellor and his people in, sit them down and say, "look, I'm out there arguing for you but Jesus you've got to accept that BP is 2 million pounds a second profit and these guys are getting screwed for huge amounts of money for fuel, it really is a bit of a joke". ... That is one of the reactive things about, not the parliamentary process that happens in the Chamber, but the parliamentary process, as a series of meetings between backbenchers as tribunes or advocates for their local people and the Government. So there was a genuine to and fro ... there is a lot of dialogue in these situations, he [Gordon Brown] will say I understand what you're saying and I genuinely think he does, he doesn't simply say I hear what you're saying when he means I don't agree with you. He'll then tell you to go away and come back and he'll tell you I've worked this out we've done this and we've done that for these companies. There was a two-way dialogue. You were getting your point over about what you picked up on the ground. ... At the same time you were getting that message over to him [Gordon Brown] in the meeting but he was also coming back and putting his message across about the processes he had put in place to benefit these companies and I would take this back to my constituency ... During that period I did a lot of writing to people, I would write to people that had raised things. I would take names and addresses and I would write to people. I would also write to the

Chancellor and say “here’s what people have said” and I would try and get those points over to him. (interview, Michael Connarty)

Andrew Miller’s experience was quite different. Mr. Miller performed two ‘conduit’ roles in relation to the fuel blockade at the Stanlow refinery. First, he communicated the public safety concerns from his constituents directly to the protestors and to the oil company responsible for the refinery. Second, he communicated details about the Stanlow blockade directly to officials and ministers in Whitehall. The Stanlow refinery was blockaded again in 2001 and during that protest Mr. Miller again communicated details directly to the Home Office. This close contact between minister and backbencher was in Mr. Miller’s view ‘quite extraordinary’:

I spent most of the night [7 September 2000] seeking to negotiate with people who were extremely wound up but who were in my view doing something that had to be stopped and that was blockading access to the second biggest hazard site in England. ... Initially, I acted as a broker between the company and the protestors but I then used the company’s resources to alert ministers, to give reports to the duty ministers as to what was going on and by early in the morning I was actually personally speaking to ministers. (interview, Andrew Miller)

Cathie Peattie represented the constituency of Grangemouth, which was the site of a Scottish fuel blockade. During the protests, Mrs. Peattie provided the Scottish Executive with ‘feedback’ about the situation at the protest site and also ‘errand ran’ specific constituency issues to the Scottish Executive. The role performed by this MSP is remarkably similar to Andrew Miller’s, as her primary concern was the public safety of her constituents. Mrs. Peattie’s ability to communicate with the most important actors in relation to the Grangemouth blockade was a consequence of the relationships she had developed with the Scottish Executive, the trade unions representing the fuel lorry drivers, and the emergency services and local people in her constituency:

In a sense my role was liaising with BP and supporting my constituents because many of my constituents lived near the depot and many people were very

concerned about large groups of people around the town being cut off in particular areas and so I was passing on my constituent concerns, local people's concerns. Although some were supportive of the fuel blockade and the principle around the high cost of fuel, local people were not particularly happy about what was happening and I was involved in police planning as well, out during the nights with the police looking at what was happening, speaking to some of the people involved [in the protests] ... I was really just keeping an eye on what was happening from a public safety point of view. ... Obviously I had strong links with the trade unions as well because the tanker drivers were at risk. My links were more with my constituents and with the trade unions that were involved than with BP. I think I was listened to. The police were happy to involve me in all of their planning and that was helpful so I knew what was happening and when it was happening and I was prepared to go out during the night with the police and look at what was happening and it was always safety that was my concern. ... I was feeding back to the Executive and feeding back to our ministers. (interview, Cathie Peattie)

However, Mrs. Peattie also claimed that the role that she performed would have been relatively unique because she was one of two MSPs with constituents directly affected by the blockade. What this suggests is that, just like the Westminster case, a very small number of MSPs performed specific errand running and feedback function. Kenny MacAskill reinforced this by arguing that the politics of the crisis meant that Opposition MSPs were not given access to the Scottish Executive. According to Mr. MacAskill, there was no way for him to communicate directly with ministers because he was an Opposition MSP operating in a new political system. When asked whether or not he had performed a conduit role, Mr. MacAskill replied:

No that wasn't my role. I think you might find in a more matured body politic that might happen but that didn't happen then, there wasn't that relationship, relationships have been formed and I think now perhaps there might be some element of brokerage available that wasn't there then. ... there was no outlet for me to communicate legitimate issues directly to the Executive. (interview, Kenny MacAskill)

The English Exam Crisis

Only one exam crisis interviewee, Oliver Heald, argued that MPs, acting as conduits, were important in this case. Mr. Heald stated that the communication of specific

constituent concerns into government had a series of effects. First, as MPs highlighted problematic cases pressure built on the DfES to acknowledge that this was a policy problem. The cumulative amount of constituency complaints transmitted from the backbenches to the DfES is one reason, according to Mr. Heald why the Tomlinson review was announced:

I think the importance of Parliament was that Parliament is a network and if you go round, as I was doing in the tea room, saying, "have you seen what the hell's going on with these A level results?" other people say "oh yeah, I've had one of those" and gradually the word spread and one or two other MPs started mentioning it and suddenly we had a campaign and then the Government was put under a lot of pressure and they announced the Tomlinson review. I think in terms of Parliament it was about a lot of people here becoming worried about it because of constituents getting on to them and then us getting on to the Minister, the QCA and trying to get a response. ... They [his constituents] were very happy that I was doing what they wanted ... It [Parliament] does have the effect of providing a channel and I think people feel that it is a good thing that you can raise these concerns in a very public way and that you can get things changed. For example, the Gearings [a constituent affected by the grading problems who later got into Oxford] were extremely pleased with the way it worked out, that we had done a good job and that things had changed for the better as a result and there were a lot of people that felt we had done a good job. (interview, Oliver Heald)

Second, the individual cases were addressed by the DfES. Third, the championing of individual cases generated local support for him and for Parliament, regardless of the outcomes.

However, no other interviewee supported Mr Heald's claim about the importance of constituency communication in this case. Paul Holmes, for example, stated that the degree of communication he had with his constituents was 'negligible' and no different to any other year (interview, Paul Holmes). This perspective was reinforced by the interviewed officials (interviews, UK Official E, G). For example, one member of the DfES emphasised that there 'was not a huge amount' of direct departmental contact with MPs with regard to constituent issues. When pressed, this interviewee could only recall one instance where the Minister

asked for assistance to deal with an MP inquiry. Any comparison with the 'extraordinary' style of contact that DEFRA officials had described in relation to FMD was refuted strongly (interview, UK Official G). Oliver Heald's experience, however, cannot be ignored merely because the majority of interviewees did not share it. It seems likely, as Mr Heald himself claimed, that a limited number of MPs had a significant case-load of constituent problems and that beyond these individuals the number of MPs needing to perform conduit functions was small (interview, Oliver Heald). This argument is reinforced by the contributions of MPs during the main debate that focused on the crisis. Hansard records only three MPs, one of whom was Mr Heald, using the debate to communicate specific constituent problems directly to the Minister (HC Debs., 16 October 2002, vol. 390).

The Scottish Exam Crisis

Cathie Peattie and Marilyn Livingstone, both Labour MSPs, stated that they performed errand running duties (interviews, Cathie Peattie, Marilyn Livingstone). Mrs. Livingstone explained that she passed constituent concerns via the Chamber and by written correspondence and that, 'the Executive did respond, oh yes, I would write directly to the Minister and pass on issues, I would take information back to constituents, and I would also take information back to the Minister and say I'm still getting representations, people are still not happy' (interview, Marilyn Livingstone). Cathie Peattie's experience of errand running was also positive. She used her position as Deputy Convener of the Education Committee to communicate single issues directly into the SQA. This situation was described by the MSP as 'quite unique' in her experience because she was, 'dealing directly with the SQA ... I had a direct line to the leaders of the SQA at that time so I could use that to feed stuff directly in to them' (interview, Cathie Peattie). However, Brian Monteith, the Conservative Opposition Spokesman, explained that his constituency communication was all one way. He was communicating information from the inquiry process back to concerned

constituents but was not communicating their issues into SEED or the SQA. Mr. Monteith argued that his position as a committee member involved in an inquiry made him reluctant to contact the Executive directly with constituent issues. He also argued that his position as the Conservative Education Spokesman meant that he would not be received favourably by ministers or officials if he did try and communicate 'errands' (interview, Brian Monteith).

The SEED official involved in the crisis confirmed that there was, 'actually an obscene amount of ministerial correspondence. The bulk of which was MSPs writing to the Minister on behalf of their constituents' (interview, SE Official E). Brian Monteith's argument that 'errands' ran by Opposition MSPs like him would be treated differently was refuted. However, this official did argue that backbenchers from the Executive parties would be better informed and more able to communicate accurate information back to their constituents:

Obviously, briefing of Labour and Lib Dem backbenchers goes on. All parties brief their backbenchers. That's obviously something that I wasn't involved in. Civil servants don't get involved in all that but I'm sure it was going on and they might have been getting a bit more information about what was going on in the crisis. In terms of individual constituency cases, however, that was absolutely not the case. Any MSP that writes in, even if it's an MSP who is a different Minister, who has got a constituent issue, all of those get handled the same way, they all get handled by official procedure. They are not taken any more or less seriously but I'm sure it's true that backbench MSPs from the coalition parties were being given a bit more briefing and a bit more information in general about what was going on. (interview, SE Official E)

5.2 Parliamentarians as Gatekeepers and Lightning Rods

In chapter three it was argued that representatives could help crisis managers by reducing the level of unnecessary contact that they have with affected constituents during a crisis. Pressure could be alleviated in two ways. First, representatives could act as 'lightning rods'. This means that parliamentarians become the focus of emotional outbursts from affected constituents. The idea behind the 'lightning rod' function is that the parliamentarian attracts

and then absorbs expressions of emotion from constituents on behalf of crisis managers but does not communicate them onward. The representative is, therefore, an end-point. The grievances that they listen to do not become part of their constituency case load and are never 'input' into government. A second way in which representatives could alleviate pressure off a crisis response is by acting as a 'gatekeeper' or 'filter' through which constituent demands have to travel before arriving at a crisis manager. A representative may, for example, communicate one single message onwards to a crisis responder after they have been contacted by several constituents with the same complaint. Alternatively, cases might only be 'errand ran' if representatives consider them to be a priority. In this way, parliamentarians can actively sieve the demands of constituents in order to free-up crisis managers.

Foot and Mouth

Three MPs stated that they acted as a 'lightning rod' during the FMD crisis (interviews, Lembit Opik, David Curry, Mark Todd). The remaining two MPs did not concur with these experiences. Owen Paterson did not feel he was an end-point for emotional outbursts because he publicly challenged the Government throughout the epidemic while David Borrow's constituency is largely urban, which meant he had a limited amount of contact with affected constituents (interviews, Owen Paterson, David Borrow).

The idea that parliamentarians act as gatekeepers with the capacity to filter the demands made on Government during a crisis was only supported by two MPs (interviews, David Curry, Mark Todd). Mark Todd, for example, was asked if he filtered his case load before passing issues onto the appropriate officials:

Yes, you often got that. For example, I had a number of complaints about the valuation scheme. I had a number of the same complaints about the slow decision making and movement controls. You have to pursue the individual ones as very often there are individual administrative barriers in the way, but

you can also make more general references for the repeated complaints in parliamentary debates or parliamentary questions. (interview, Mark Todd)

The MP recalled one occasion when a farmer took him to a field where lambing had taken place in horrendous conditions. According to Mr. Todd, the farmer wished to show him the consequences that complying with disease control measures had for his livestock even though he realised that the MP was powerless to help his specific situation (interview, Mark Todd). As far as Mr Todd was concerned, the farmer needed to have an outlet for his anger and this helped that individual to deal with the catastrophic effects of FMD:

It's about anger and writing to someone with something to be angry about and people who do not necessarily expect action to be taken as a consequence of their anger, partly because deep down they may feel that actually what's been done is right, they still feel angry about it but they have to bite the bullet. So our role as public representatives can be about quite simply, 'taking it on the chin' and living with it, not just with Foot and Mouth, but continuously with other issues. You can get the impression that constituents just want to 'have a go'. (interview, Mark Todd)

All of the DEFRA officials refuted the suggestion that the 'lightening rod' function relieved pressure off them during the crisis (interviews, UK Officials C, D, H). It was Ministry staff, not MPs, they contended, who had absorbed the dissatisfactions of those affected. It was more likely, according to these interviewees, that *officials* acted as lightning rods and reduced the 'abuse' and 'flak' that parliamentarians received. One official, however, did indicate that some MPs alleviated the pressure on MAFF by acting as 'filters':

I think one or two of them did. The ones that we had more dealings with and who, therefore, understood more and more of what we were doing and how we operated would do because they were able to explain what was going and what it was all about. So they did help to manage that pressure to a certain extent. I wouldn't overstate it though because actually much of the time they came back to us to settle issues, and you're almost duty bound to do something if they come back to you with an issue even if frankly it's not very high on your agenda. And I did get one or two requests across the board for things that were really not too helpful but which you felt bound to do to keep the relationship going. (interview, UK Official D)

It is also clear that Welsh Assembly Members had to deal with extreme emotional outbursts from those affected by FMD. In this case, their role went well beyond merely absorbing criticism on behalf of the WAG. Glyn Davies, for example, was one of a number of parliamentarians from across the UK who described taking phone calls from farmers and family members who confessed to being suicidal (interview, Glyn Davies). A second AM explained that those kinds of incident defined his involvement in the crisis:

There was that personal crisis where people are telling you “everything is collapsing” and “can you hear the gun shooting my animals?” and “I’m going to commit suicide” and “you fucking politicians aren’t doing anything about it, do you understand?” and that is very hard to deal with. ... It obviously serves a very, very useful purpose for the individual because very often the ones that were emotionally involved to the extent that they were almost obsessive often only had a small group of animals with whom they were very attached and once some guy comes out and says we’re going to shoot these... you know. Immediately, when you say Foot and Mouth crisis they are the things that come back to me, those issues. (interview, Mick Bates)

It was also argued *by officials* that AMs relieved the pressure on them, as they ‘were all being approached by their constituents, all with their own particular sob stories, so clearly the more that we could keep the political side of it up to speed it was actually taking a load off us’ (interview, WAG Official B). Assembly Members, rather than civil servants, were better placed to help farmers unburden their emotions, according to a second official:

When they [farmers] were getting in touch with us, through the helpline or whatever, they knew effectively that they were talking to the government in Wales. When they were talking to AMs, in a lot of instances, as I say these people are from the area, they’re from farming families, and they were just sometimes a friend or someone who could really empathise with the local situation much better than we could. (interview, WAG Official C)

The MSPs who represented affected areas gave similar accounts to the Welsh Assembly Members. Scottish parliamentarians absorbed extreme emotions from farmers during the crisis. Alex Fergusson recalled that after the pre-emptive culls started he was, ‘almost like a

social worker or a Samaritan' (interview, Alex Fergusson). Elaine Murray characterised the nature of many of her constituency based communications:

It was emotional stuff, it wasn't aggression in the sense of "this is your fault" or "you should be able to sort this out" it was more emotional. A lot of people were very upset and it wasn't just the farmers. When I was dealing with issues and phoning vets, there were a lot of vets that were pretty upset as they didn't expect to be murdering loads of animals and they were having to live away from home for long periods so things were quite difficult for them and there were a lot of people making you aware of the stress they were going through. Now some people became quite agitated, became I suppose, slightly aggressive because that's a way of dealing with stress. Yes, it did get quite emotional. Whether there is a major disaster or not, when people have problems just talking to someone about those problems helps and having someone listen to them helps and that can be about anything. ... the business of talking is important. (interview, Elaine Murray)

Both these parliamentarians filtered demands from their constituencies. Alex Fergusson, for example, explained that he and fellow MSP David Mundell:

Would distil the information when we were taking it up the way to the Minister and to the Parliament and we would condense our combined information that we put together or had been brought to our attention during the meetings with senior vets down there or senior ministers up here ... it depended which way the information was being transmitted. ... I have no doubt at all that we had a hugely important role to play and part of that was communicating between those that had to carry out the job and those that were most affected and that's why I felt needed in that role. Part of that was distilling all the information that we got and taking it to the right person, the right agency. (interview, Alex Fergusson)

Although MSPs absorbed emotions and filtered grievances, only Alex Fergusson claimed that this relieved pressure off crisis managers. Elaine Murray was unsure about, how many SEERAD officials were helped by her filtering her constituents issues (interview, Elaine Murray). The interviewed SEERAD officials, like their DEFRA colleagues, were also reluctant to acknowledge that they were freed from constituent communications in any way. Once again it was argued that it was officials, rather than MSPs, who absorbed the majority of emotions (interviews, SE Officials, A, B).

The Fuel Crisis

Neither of the two MPs who performed constituency roles in the fuel crisis confirmed that they acted as lightning rods. Michael Connarty recalled that he was communicating rather than absorbing grievances:

The lorry drivers simply wanted to present their case and they seemed very grateful to me for coming down and they were happy that I had not come to appease them. I presented them with my analysis and they asked me to take their message back. Nobody when I went down was feeling that they had to get at me. Most people were like “at least you came down”, “at least you took the trouble to come and speak to us”, “you don’t agree with us but here is our case” so a conduit rather than conductor is a very good way of putting it. (interview, Michael Connarty)

However, support for the importance of the constituency representative as a lightning rod was communicated in a general sense without reference to the case studies. One Select Committee Chair, for example, stated that acting as a lightning rod locally is important:

Because people can see the lines. They know when I get off the train in Crewe, they know I’m there, they know how they can find me, and they know they can bitch at me, which is very, very important. That’s one of your functions as an MP. To give you an example, I had a lovely man who last week wrote me a very indignant letter asking if I would please stop funding the Nottingham tram, so we wrote back and said we don’t fund the Nottingham tram and he wrote back and said “well what do you do then?”, so we sent him a guide to Parliament but at least he felt that he had somebody to bitch at and we could write back and say “knock it off mate”. (interview, Gwyneth Dunwoody)

However, the idea that representatives always act as an end-point was refuted because constituency contacts often forced MPs to ‘ask questions and put pressure on’:

With a very difficult situation, and political situations can be very fraught, you need somebody to have a go at. ... I felt very strongly that you need to give people the right to target their anger. There is nothing worse than untargeted anger. I think it’s very important because if you handle it intelligently at least they feel that you’re listening and of course with a lot of these things you’re very sympathetic anyway. It just demonstrates to them that at least you’re going to ask questions and put pressure on. I think a lot of people only get in contact with a Member of Parliament when they have a real crisis and then it’s suddenly quite

helpful when they realise that they can do that. (interview, Gwyneth Dunwoody)

Another MP with significant constituency duties during the fuel protests also noted that:

The ability of someone to come to me is very important in a crisis. A fellow came up to me yesterday and just wanted to berate me about some local issue. He knew who I was, he knew what my job was and he knew he could come and let off steam and he had that ability to do that ... It does suppress any over the top action if there is a real person that people can say things to. (interview, Andrew Miller)

In Wales, no Assembly Member stated that they acted as a 'lightning rod' although one WAG official recognised that this was likely to be a function that AMs would perform during crises (interview, WAG Official A). However, the same official also argued that it was impossible to gauge whether or not this alleviated pressure from crisis managers because WAG officials were always the focus of emotional outbursts during crises (interview, WAG Official A).

Assembly Members did state that they actively filtered constituent grievances in order to lighten the load of WAG personnel responsible for resolving fuel shortages (Interviews, John Griffiths, John Marek). John Griffiths, for example, explained that when the WAG was focused on managing the crisis, 'Assembly Members in general could be a sort of filtering process because they are at an intermediate stage between the people and the administration and in some ways that's probably helpful' (interview, John Griffiths). The Assembly's Deputy Presiding Officer's answer to 'lightning rod' questions was extremely interesting:

At the very worst people have been everywhere and done everything. They've changed their solicitor, they've written to the Queen, they've written to the Prime Minister, you're the last resort and by that time there is absolutely nothing you can do, so you lend them your ear for fifteen minutes and then you gently have to tell them that tomorrow is the first day of the rest of their life ... but

what would I be doing if I wasn't doing that? I'm not in an executive position so I wouldn't be dealing with the crisis and to be fair you don't have to worry ministers that are involved in a crisis and one shouldn't. For most people in the fuel protests petrol was going up in price and it was more difficult to get it and there were queues at the petrol station. It wasn't a crisis where people's lives were in danger immediately and it wasn't something that was very difficult to live with. It was inconvenient; it was a nuisance not a real threat. In dealing with a crisis like that, if it was just one minister here, well yes of course I would spare him or her a constituent's case if I could. (interview, John Marek)

The argument that AMs are likely to be the last resort was also corroborated by a WAG official who claimed that Welsh representatives were, 'the likely recipients of the final exasperations of constituents' (interview, WAG Official A). The description of representatives as the end-point of a long succession of contacts is interesting for two reasons. First, because it casts doubt over any claim that AM's relieve pressure on officials. If representatives are the end-point of a long chain of contacts, WAG officials will already have been contacted beforehand. Second, Marek's quote suggests that representative-constituency relationships might be important in terms of post-crisis termination. The discussion of cathartic functions in chapter three suggested that representative mechanisms (most notably post-crisis accountability fora) could provide a sanitizing 'line in the sand' for those affected, which marked the end-point of the crisis. John Marek's statement suggests that AMs can perform this function on a personal one-to-one basis with affected constituents. The process of lending 'them your ear for fifteen minutes' and then gently telling them 'that tomorrow is the first day of the rest of their life', as described above, encapsulates this cathartic function perfectly at the individual rather than institutional level.

MSPs connected to the fuel protests stated that they had absorbed local emotions and that this could have insulated the Scottish Executive to an extent (interviews, Cathie Peattie, Kenny MacAskill). However, the contributions in this area again suggest that this was not a particularly important function and that very few MSPs actually acted as lightning rods. Cathie Peattie, for example, stated:

I'm not sure about the other MSPs, I had the protests on my doorstep, which meant that I was in my constituency more than others would have been. People in my area were concerned about what was happening on their door step ... At the time, before it and after it, there had been real issues about health and safety in BP. Incidents and whatever and I think in the back of people's minds there was a possibility of another incident happening with the blockade on, so it's natural that people will call you or come and see you and that they can get emotional or be concerned. That's what you're there for, to deal with that. That's not really the concern of the police or even BP, dealing with my constituent's on that level is my job. (interview, Cathie Peattie)

English Exam Crisis

Only Oliver Heald (again) argued that he acted as a lightning rod during the exam crisis. However, Mr Heald also stressed that although he attracted a lot of anger this did not necessarily mean that he always protected the Government. Instead the MP suggested that he would often channel that anger:

You do [absorb rage] but of course they're not always raging at you even if they seem to be. ... You know we're an avenue when people are desperate and so people will always be very worked up and angry and rightly so. If you were dealing with a bureaucracy that was as pathetic as they were in this case you deserve to be annoyed. Of course, the MP is there as the conduit for that and also to do something about it, so I never minded if people were worked up and angry about an issue where they should be, that's actually a good thing as you can take that and do something about it. (interview, Oliver Heald)

5.3 Parliamentarians as 'Mobilisers of Policy Support'

Foot and Mouth

From the five FMD MPs interviewed, only David Curry and Mark Todd claimed to have mobilised support for disease control measures locally (interviews, David Curry, Mark Todd). Mark Todd, for example, remembered writing letters to constituents who would have preferred that a vaccination strategy was implemented. Concerns about MAFF's eradication policy within his constituency grew after the 'Phoenix campaign' sparked public sympathy. He described the argument he was conveying to constituents at the time:

I was saying, you do realise that the animals that you're talking about being killed, that is their fate in life anyway, we don't breed cattle and sheep to look at, they are not going to live full and happy lives in the fields, they are raised for slaughter? I agree it's sad if their lives are terminated earlier than they otherwise would be but it's not really the case that we're doing something that is dramatically out of line ... With the 'Phoenix the calf' thing. I certainly got some mail about that. I had to explain that to the people, saying yes, he does look very cute and it's very sad that this kind of thing has to happen, but this is necessary. (interview, Mark Todd)

All the DEFRA officials acknowledged that MPs mobilised support and co-operation for aspects of the crisis response (interviews UK Officials C, D, H). However, according to one civil servant, not all MPs could be described as supportive. The degree of support mobilisation was:

Very much different depending on the MP ... some were very much "we're all in this together how can we help?" Some were just sniping from the sides. Partly dependent on the level of disease they did or didn't have. The ones that tended to have very little or not much at all tended to snipe from the sides rather more than the others ... The MPs would pitch in in different ways, so x was highly supportive and almost saw himself as part of the team and we were happy for him to do so because we got on really well. The x MP was quite helpful in a number of issues but also felt no compunction about pressing for a particular constituent's case even though it was not being very helpful to do so. The MP for x was not very happy, she felt the only way of talking to us was to throw things at us. She would talk to us but it was always, "why aren't you doing this sort of approach?" there was a poster that went out in 67/68 on all the main roads saying you are now entering Foot and Mouth country, "why aren't you doing that now?" It was that sort of approach. We had a session with her and the Minister at one stage; not very constructive. (interview, UK Official H)

Welsh Assembly Members also generated support and consent in a number of ways for the WAG (interviews, WAG Officials, B, C, Glyn Davies, Mick Bates; HC 888 2002: Annex):

A group of farmers had got their shotguns out and parked at a place called Kerry Hill because somebody had said that they might have to take Forestry Commission sites to help burn livestock there. The police phoned me and asked me to come up there. I went up there and it was like the wild west. They were stood there with their Land Rovers and Suzuki's parked across the road with guns saying "nobody's coming in here, we're not having those Foot and Mouth

animals burned here”. It was surreal, it was on top of this beautiful hill, there was a dozen of them but in the end I helped get it all sorted, everybody drives off and I said “look, blame me, if this does happen” and that dissolved the situation. ... That was just dealing with the crisis, they had no confidence in government at all and they needed assurance because of all the rumours. (interviews, Mick Bates)

There were instances where we had very great difficulties with certain farmers who didn't want to let people on their land, or were threatening violence or who were in the depths of despair and we quite often used local AMs to help. ... I recall we were going to establish a disposal site up in north east Wales at one stage and we got the local MP and the local AM to facilitate a meeting of local people for us. Very helpful. (interview, WAG Official C)

Alex Fergusson and Elaine Murray also mobilised support for the disease control efforts of SEERAD. However, the testimonies they provided were not straightforward. Elaine Murray, for example, merely stated that she would convey the reasons behind decisions to affected individuals in order to provide them with reassurance that they were part of a wider strategy. The provision of explanations, in her view, was likely to have mobilised some degree of support for SEERAD decisions (interview, Elaine Murray). Alex Fergusson also stated that he was mobilising support and that eventually the farmers in his area accepted the cull policies. However, although he was supporting the general control strategy, he was also willing to help farmers challenge individual decisions on the ground:

I also said to more than one guy you have a right to challenge this decision, you have the right to appeal against the decision to slaughter, you can do that but do you want to take that risk? So to a certain extent you were helping the process take place. I think that was right and for the greater good but you were also pointing out that if you wanted to go to war on this you have every right to do so and you can do that. So you would support the individual as much as possible while pointing out their wider responsibilities. Some farmers in the early days wanted to fight it, fight the decisions and it could be fought, you could challenge the decisions but at the end of the day most gave in for the greater good and that was what it was all about and it was interesting; within a remarkably short space of time the cull was accepted - not liked or welcomed - but it was accepted. (interview, Alex Fergusson)

SEERAD officials were very positive about the ability of MSPs and MPs to engender

farming support in their communities. Both of the interviewed civil servants stated that their role was to convince and reassure MSPs so that they could then mobilise support for the disease control strategy. One official explained that, 'you can't really control a disease of any description by any means if you don't have the support of the livestock industry and MSPs did help there to some extent' (interview, SE Official A), and a second claimed that once MSPs were 'on board', they were an asset to the crisis response:

They did generate support. They were all there, they all wanted to help. They all wanted to see the disease out of Dumfries and Galloway as quickly as they could, so they would do anything they could. As long as they felt we were doing the right thing and going in the right direction we got really good support from them and that was from all parties. These crises are better addressed if you're taking the people with you and if they understand what you're doing even if they may not like it, if they understand what you're doing and why you're doing it then you're more likely to get people on side so I think the MSPs were quite good. I think that they saw part of their role as to reassure their constituents. So they would come to us and get the reassurance from us and then they would go back to their constituents and they would be quoted a lot in the local newspapers. (interview, SE Official B)

Finally, an official within the Civil Contingencies Division of the Scottish Executive was asked whether crisis managers had recognised that MSPs were capable of mobilising consent for crisis responses:

Yes, when you look at bad things that happen particularly out of the blue, often the most important people for solving the problem over the short and long term are from the community itself. As the professionals in the area we need to use any vehicle that is available to us to help and focus communities activities. That sounds awfully top down but it's also to actually get feedback from the community about the issues themselves. That's absolutely crucial but also it's important to remember that a two way process of communication can engender support for your actions within a community. (interview, SE Official D)

The Fuel Crisis

The two MPs with fuel blockaded constituencies did attempt to mobilise support for the Government during the fuel crisis. Michael Connarty MP travelled to the protest site in his

constituency with the aim of challenging the protestors and presenting the Government's case:

I believed that we had a mandate as a Government and that mandate was to reorganise and reprioritise the tax take and the expenditure levels within the economy because clearly the economy had been run down and so had the social capital. I was elected as a Labour representative in 1992 and 1997 to argue a case for more social capital and it meant that people had to contribute ... I have argued every time that the Chancellor has put up taxes that the purpose of all of that was to ensure there was a social contribution because it could not be ensured that if BP, Shell and Texaco were making huge amounts of money off the barrel price of oil that any of that would go back into social structure in any way ... The only people that have the duty and the responsibility so see that money goes back into social capital is government. The Government has been elected on a programme of raising money and putting that money into social capital. (interview, Michael Connarty)

Andrew Miller stated that the only argument that he presented to the protestors related to public safety and that he was not specifically mobilising support for the Government. However, by presenting this case to the protestors Mr Miller can be considered to be implicitly mobilising support for the Government's position because the realisation of his arguments would have meant that the pressure from that protest would have diminished. Brynle Williams was the leader of the blockade in Mr Miller's constituency. Mr Williams argued that the MP exacerbated negative feelings amongst the protestors by suggesting that they should 'go home':

This guy [Andrew Miller] tells us we're "good little boys, we've had our fun, nobody is hurt, nothing will be done about it, go home and forget all about it". He addressed us saying basically that we were silly school children. I sat there and listened to all this and in the end, apparently I hit the table so hard I split it and I do remember saying this, "do you understand when those men out there say it's over and they tell me it's over then we'll go home" and I said "don't you ever insult them by calling them silly little boys, don't you ever forget that". He realised then we weren't playing kid's games. (interview, Brynle Williams)

Mr. Miller also stated that his negotiations at the blockade site were unsuccessful:

A successful negotiation would have meant persuading these guys that the public safety issue was paramount and these guys would have said “goodness me you’re right Andrew we’ll back off and picket from a greater distance”. I would never in a million years suggest that they had no right to protest, of course they had a right to protest but the manner in which they were going about the protest had to be questioned. (interview, Andrew Miller)

No Welsh interviewee suggested that AMs mobilised consent within their constituencies for the WAG during the fuel crisis. The only other evidence of support mobilisation was provided by an MSP. Kenny MacAskill was quite willing to acknowledge that the SNP attempted to gain political capital from the fuel protests. However, he maintained that while he was certainly attacking rather than defending UK Government and Scottish Executive policy, he was also working hard to ensure that the fuel protests remained peaceful. The extent to which this can be classified as an attempt to mobilise support for specific policy is questionable. Nevertheless, it does illustrate an example of an Opposition member attempting to a make a crisis more manageable:

I thought it was important that we went with a disciplined, tight, organised protest cause if it did spiral off and you have one accident then the whole of the public’s support is lost, so my efforts were to ‘shore up’ the leadership of the RHA, to show that they were doing a good job and to make sure that they were seen to be doing something. Something which I feel was a failing of the Executive was that they went to war with the leadership of the RHA and arguably this could have undermined them and provoked spontaneous disorganised action. Supporting the RHA, that was in the interest of not just those of us who had political gains to make. It was also in the interests of us as a society because sometimes politicians have duties to us as a country not simply to the narrow party interests, something that might benefit the SNP but would undermine Scotland wouldn’t be a long term benefit to us. (interview, Kenny MacAskill)

English Exam Crisis

Constituency communication through MPs was viewed as important to one DfES civil servant because of what was defined as their ‘persuasive capacity’. Members of Parliament, according to this official, constitute:

Potentially, over 600 ambassadors for your policy or your Department. My job after the re-grading issue was to persuade them about our arguments. That what we were doing was right, that the new qualification worked and that the new reforms were correct. If I could not do this then I, or any other civil servant, wouldn't be doing the job. (interview, UK Official G)

During the course of the interview this official stated, several times, that, if persuaded, MPs could go back and explain to those affected that the Department's policies were worth supporting or, at least, should not be undermined.

No evidence relating to this function emerged from the Scottish exam crisis interviewees.

5.4 Parliamentarians as 'Horizon Scanners'

No interviewee in any of the cases provided support for the suggestion that parliamentarians performed a horizon scanning function prior to any of these crises. One Welsh Assembly Member's discussion of the pre-fuel protest period, however, alluded to a potential capacity in this area by indicating that he was 'was aware of problems building ... as I recall we had emails and other contacts with people who were concerned with the issues but nothing beyond them' (interview, John Griffiths). This contribution must be juxtaposed against the views of a senior WAG official who stated that Assembly Members were totally unaware of the upcoming protest (interview, WAG Official) and the leader of the largest fuel blockade, Brynle Williams, also argued that 'nobody knew' about the protests as 'they came from nowhere' (interview, Brynle Williams). However, the caveat remains that one AM's testimony does provide a very mild empirical substantiation to the contrary. A second parliamentarian, this time an MSP, also indicated that he was aware of a problem emerging pre-crisis but, like John Griffiths, did not pass his concerns to the Scottish Executive (interview, Kenny MacAskill)

Three senior civil servants - one member of the UK Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies

Secretariat and two members of the Scottish Executive Civil Contingencies Division - contended that parliamentary members can have an informal role in horizon scanning, either by publicising issues or by bringing them directly to the attention of ministers or specific officials (interviews, UK Official F, SE Officials, C, D). For example, the Cabinet Office official spoke about meetings that he had held with MPs in which a range of issues were discussed. This was considered to be an example of the informal way in which MPs fed into the Secretariat's horizon scanning process (interview, UK Official).

The Contingencies Secretariat has a well developed network of bodies that perform horizon scanning functions. These organisations are co-ordinated via Local Resilience Forums. The forums are structured around police boundaries and link a range of local emergency responders. According to the Cabinet Office official, parliamentarians with well developed relationships with local responders will be able to communicate into Resilience Forums and could influence horizon scanning on that basis (interview, UK Official F). This claim was supported by Scottish Executive officials from the Civil Contingencies Division who also emphasised that MSPs could feed into the Executive's horizon scanning informally (interviews, SE Officials C, D):

I'm not quite sure how you would systematise that but we certainly pick up information from our ministers, partly because of the way the Scottish Parliament is, our ministers are rubbing shoulders with MSPs regularly just as Westminster MPs are as well, and they rub shoulders with their constituents. Yeah, information and views can travel quite quickly in that way. ... So if an MSP is picking up from local folk that there is some kind of risk that could be picked up we could hear about that. Parliament to me in this instance is there as a kind of safeguard, if it's not working, if people are picking things up locally then we might hear of it. I wouldn't personally see them as having a role in terms of doing what I see as an Executive function of horizon scanning but maybe a committee might decide it wants to look at say, pandemic flu and what are the risks and that is their prerogative. I wouldn't personally see it as becoming part and parcel of their daily work. That's the job of the Executive. We're accountable to Parliament rather than Parliament doing it for us. (interviews, SE Official C)

This capacity must be bracketed as a potential function that representatives can perform. It should not be discounted entirely because of the lack of case study evidence. After the fuel and FMD crises, civil contingencies structures across Britain were radically overhauled. The current system of horizon scanning in the United Kingdom is considerably more developed than the system in place prior to these crises. It is conceivable that informal relationships between parliamentarians and crisis managers will develop further alongside these new contingencies frameworks. This is one possible reason why no evidence was found in relation to the case studies yet civil servants with crisis management responsibilities today recognise the (informal) potential of parliamentarians in this sense.

Constituency Roles: Summary

A series of constituency roles, which could potentially enhance a crisis response, were outlined at the start of this chapter. Horizon scanning was not performed in any of the case studies. However, there was evidence of some potential capacity in this area. Errand running and feedback roles, however, were an identifiable element in the management of several crises. The analysis of these roles showed how crises can affect relationships between officials and parliamentarians. Elected representatives are treated as 'outsiders' by civil servants during periods of normalcy. However, during the FMD, fuel and Scottish exam crises certain representatives became 'insiders'. They were granted 'unique', 'unusual' and 'extraordinary' status and allowed to communicate directly with ministers and officials in order to assist the management of the crisis. In this specific sense, parliamentarians who performed 'errand running' and 'feedback' roles became part of the operational dimensions of crisis responses. The 'lightning rod' function is also important to the management of crises but not in the way that was expected. Representatives certainly attract emotional outbursts from affected constituents. They are not, however, either able or willing to insulate crisis managers from these forms of communication. The testimonies of

UK, Welsh and Scottish officials indicated that parliamentarians did not always spare them from the burden of dealing with emotionally affected stakeholders. Indeed, certain parliamentarians, like Michael Connarty and Oliver Heald, stated that they were 'conduits rather than conductors' and 'avenues' through which anger could be channelled towards government. The 'lightening rod' function remains important, however, not because it provides an end-point for communications but because it allows constituents to vent their emotions cathartically at an individual one-to-one level. Parliamentarians can clearly mobilise specific support for crisis responses locally. The testimonies of officials in England, Scotland and Wales indicate that this is an important function because it can lead to more effective policy implementation and engender reassurance about policy performance during a period of uncertainty. However, a smaller stream of evidence also points towards more problematic consequences which can emerge through the actions of parliamentarians. It is clear that representatives can also mobilise dissent, as illustrated in the contributions of Owen Paterson and Alex Fergusson, while Andrew Miller's negotiations with fuel protestors shows that misguided attempts to mobilise support can exacerbate crisis management problems.

These findings are significant, especially to crisis management scholars, because they indicate that parliamentarians can play a role in 'front-line' crisis response operations. Up until this point, crisis research has tangentially touched upon the role that parliaments can play in the politics of crisis management. The section above, however, has shown that elected representatives can play a role 'inside' the operations of a crisis response. Parliamentarians can improve the effectiveness of policy implementation by enhancing communications, generating support for authorities and providing affected stakeholders with an appropriate outlet for the expression of emotions. Constituency functions could help bring parliaments to the attention of scholars operating in the 'mainstream' of the

crisis management field who would usually be unconcerned with political science perspectives. The majority of crisis management has always been focused on the rational and technical operations of a crisis response. The fact that parliamentarians can now be seen as relevant to those dimensions means that they should now become units of analysis within the mainstream fields of crisis management outlined in chapter one. Parliamentarians, alongside the representative systems which determine the nature of their constituency interactions, should be of interest to sociological, organisational and 'rational hazards' researchers, not as peripheral phenomena but as potentially important actors capable of affecting a crisis response's 'front line' effectiveness.

The importance of constituency roles in this regard is likely to grow as they are acknowledged by contingencies and crisis management personnel. The Civil Contingencies Secretariat already facilitate the informal inclusion of MPs into horizon scanning processes and the Scottish Civil Contingencies Division acknowledge that engaging with MPs is a 'priority' when crises impact within communities. Individual parliamentarians, therefore, are likely to become an entrenched feature in the operational management of crises; particularly if they require a decentralised response. Parliamentary scholars should, perhaps, be less surprised by claims which indicate the importance of constituency roles in this area. These findings provide a new strand of support for pre-existing parliamentary research which has described how members of the House of Commons have become more constituency attentive and less concerned with the internal procedures of the House in the past four decades (Marsh 1985; Rawlings 1990; Norton and Wood 1993). This trend provides further evidence for the claim that the involvement of representatives in processes of crisis management is likely to develop further. If the orientation towards constituency services continues, so will the involvement of parliamentarians in the 'front-line' operations of crisis management.

Chapter Six

Meso (Institutional) Level Functions

Introduction

Functions performed by representative assemblies as collective institutions are the focus of this chapter. The claims relating to symbolic outputs; 'issue escape' and 'exit' functions; cathartic functions; scrutiny and accountability; and, parliamentary deliberation are all examined below. The large number of institutional functions combined with the voluminous amount of interview data that each proposal generated, means that the chapter has had to be structured slightly differently to chapter five. In that chapter the theoretical propositions and the findings were summarised as a whole at the outset and then each specific proposal was examined in detail. In this chapter, however, each function's theoretical propositions and findings are dealt with sequentially in their own right. Once again, however, specific proposals that generated significant amounts of data are separated by case study and assembly.

6.1 Symbolic Output

Theoretical Propositions

Chapter one examined the work of a number of authors who have emphasised the importance of symbolic forms of communication during crises (Jackson 1976; Edelman 1977; 'tHart 1993; Eriksson 2001; Bjerfeld 2001; Steffen 2001; Brandstorm and Kuipers 2003; Boin *et al.* 2005). This literature is relevant to this thesis because national parliaments are referred to, albeit descriptively and incidentally, within the empirical narrative of certain publications (see for example, 'tHart 1993: 38; Bjerfeld 2001: 55; Steffen 2001: 471; Brandstorm and Kuipers 2003: 293; Boin *et al.* 2005: 85-108). These repeated references allude to a potentially important area of parliamentary involvement in crisis management.

Despite these references, however, there is no certainty about the role that parliaments do, or do not, perform in relation to symbolic kinds of communication. This is because the representative assembly, up until this point, has never been the *sole* focus of *rigorous* analysis.

It was argued in chapters one and three that parliamentary proceedings might be capable of playing a role in the production and communication of 'symbolic outputs'. Three specific kinds of symbolic output - framing, rituals, and masking - were defined as potentially important in terms of the crisis management-parliament relationship. Framing, according to Boin *et al.* (2005: 84-85), involves the selective exploitation of data, arguments, historical analogies and 'discourse coalitions' in order to *instrumentally* define crisis issues and the strategies for resolution. The word *instrumentally* has been emphasised because the analytical framework is focused on the ways in which representative assemblies could be used by actors and organisations for framing purposes. This kind of framing can be distinguished from other types. For example, chapter one indicated that framing can also occur unconsciously when, for example, issues are framed merely by entering the logic and structure of the state (Hay 1994). These framing processes are not examined below. Chapter one explained the problem of operationalising research from that literature and with this in mind the focus of the sections below is trained towards actors and organisations because, as units of analysis, they offer more empirical purchase.

Crisis management rituals were defined first by 'tHart (1993: 42) and then by Boin *et al.* (2005: 84-85) as, 'highly structured, or more or less standardised sequences ... often enacted at certain places and times, which themselves are endowed with special symbolic meaning'. These, in turn, 'shape and conform to public perceptions of grave disturbances'. In chapters one and three it was suggested that parliaments are endowed with symbolic importance, that

many parliamentary procedures are ritualised in nature, and that the enactment of these procedures could shape public perceptions during crises. Evidence of parliamentary involvement in three types of ritual, all defined by 'tHart (1993: 43-44), was pursued during each interview. First, *rituals of solidarity* display public compassion and affinity for those affected by crisis. Second, *rituals of reassurance and purification* can, for example, reassure the public that the appropriate authorities are in control, that panic is unwarranted, and that partisan politics have been put to one side. Finally, *rituals of animosity* can create politically advantageous feelings of hostility in order to generate support for crisis actions. Rituals are far more relevant to the politics than the operations of crisis management. In operational terms, rituals cannot always be viewed as productive because only their symbolism is meaningful. Thus, a prime ministerial visit to a disaster site or a crisis centre on the 'front line' accomplishes very little from an operational perspective. Indeed, it may even distract officials away from important crisis management roles. The ritual is undergone, however, because it communicates solidarity, compassion and concern.

Masking refers to processes through which those benefiting from the status quo attempt to mask vulnerabilities, errors or threats which may lead to unwanted change. Masking is a more extreme form of framing. Those who attempt to mask are usually viewed negatively. These processes can take a number of forms. The communication of a 'business as usual' message even when aware of significant problems, the redefinition of crises into 'normal' events, and the deliberate suppression of information were all provided as examples of masking in chapter one.

Forms of symbolic output are designed and communicated in order to influence public perceptions. If parliaments are believed to have capabilities in this area, a connection can be drawn between representative assemblies and fluctuations in the legitimacy of specific

authorities (actors, organisations, policies) during crises. This is because changes in public perception can lead to changes in the support and legitimacy attached to authorities. For example, specific authorities can be framed instrumentally as blameworthy for the cause, escalation or mismanagement of a crisis. If this kind of framing ensues, those authorities could be perceived as operating outside of what Easton calls the 'definable range' of acceptability (Easton 1965:280). Ultimately, changes in perception like this could lead to a process of de-legitimation and a threat to the continuation of authorities as public and elite support withdraws. Other authorities, however, may avoid criticism and stay within the 'range of acceptability' by promptly engaging in public rituals which symbolise their compassion for those affected and contrition for their own performance for example. If a parliament produces or communicates symbolic outputs during a crisis that affect the legitimacy and support of specific authorities, that assembly may rightly be considered to be important.

Research Findings

The main finding of this section is that UK representative assemblies are capable of producing and communicating symbolic outputs. In total, 35 out of 39 interviewees provided an example of a representative assembly producing a symbolic output during a case, or intimated that this was a function relevant to crisis episodes generally. Parliamentarians *and* crisis managers repeatedly emphasised the importance of symbolic parliamentary outputs to the management of crises. The representative assemblies were connected specifically to two types of output. First, they are important in analyses of *framing*. Thirty three officials and parliamentarians supported the claim that UK representative assemblies were relevant to framing, counter-framing and the communication of symbolic 'sound-bites'. Second, the institutions communicated *rituals of solidarity and reassurance*. Sixteen respondents presented statements which supported the existence of this

function. The comparatively small n should not be assumed to mean that rituals are less important than framing. In many interviews, important crisis managers stressed that the communication of reassurance via parliamentary rituals was more important than the involvement of parliaments in framing.

The testimonies of officials and parliamentary members, particularly in Scotland and Wales, also reveal that symbolic parliamentary outputs affected the legitimacy of specific authorities. This means that this function can be considered to be important to the management of crises.

Rituals of Solidarity and Reassurance

Foot and Mouth Disease

Eight out of 17 FMD interviewees communicated an example of a ritual of solidarity or reassurance being performed by the House of Commons, the Welsh Assembly or the Scottish Parliament. However, different types of reassurance were communicated by each institution and the involvement of each parliament in these areas also varies significantly.

In England, only one respondent agreed that the House of Commons was important in this sense. This official, a Regional Operations Director (ROD) in one area of England, claimed that one specific Commons debate helped to reassure those affected in his region that their concerns were not forgotten, despite the general election drawing political attention from the crisis:

The purpose that it [HC debate 3 July 2001] served was actually to point out to the world that we still had some major problems locally. This was a very big outbreak and because the general election had passed by, people were talking more about that rather than what was going on, so it was partly about trying to get some press and parliamentary coverage for what was going on and the detail of it. ... I think people on the ground don't like to feel that the world is moving

on by and the focus had changed to the general election fairly quickly. I think the difficulty with Foot and Mouth is that it affected so many different places for such a long period that there is an issue with fatigue. The world doesn't appear to have ended for most of us, things move on, but there are still these places that have ground to a halt, lots of dales and moors where people are struggling. (interview, UK Official H)

This is an important contribution because it outlines a theme that recurred in other interviews. Certain debates were repeatedly referred to as important because they allowed affected citizens to be reassured that their demands had been 'input' into the political system. Obviously, the extent to which these demands were actively considered by specific authorities, and translated into policy outputs, is open to question but parliamentary debates highlighted that those demands had, symbolically at least, made it on to what Cobb and Elder (1972: 85) described as the 'systemic' agenda, broadly composed of, 'all issues that are commonly perceived by members of the political community as meriting public attention'.

The ritualistic nature of the Welsh Assembly's Chamber business was claimed to have produced two effects, according to three out of the four WAG officials and Assembly Members interviewed (interviews, Glyn Davies; WAG Official B; WAG Official C). First, the Assembly's Chamber was used by the WAG to assure affected citizens that they were in control and that contingency plans were in operation. In this sense, the Assembly was communicating reassurance - but of a different type to that described by the DEFRA official above - as certain Assembly Members promoted a message that the WAG was 'in control', not that demands had been 'input' into the systemic agenda. For example, a high ranking WAG official, with responsibility for disease control across Wales, argued that making ministerial statements to plenary:

Is a priority, it's a priority for the government to inform the public, which is part of what it was doing when it was making a statement. It's also the priority of the

government to demonstrate that it is in control and it is leading the fight against the disease. Governments do need to demonstrate very early on that they inform the public, that they are taking the necessary action so that people can react in a much more confident way than if they see what they might perceive as a headless chicken approach by the government where they say, “something is going on but we’re not sure what it is”. It’s primarily an information promulgating mechanism but also it’s very much is an opportunity to demonstrate that the government knows what it is about and is taking control and is leading the fight against the crisis. (interview, WAG Official C)

Second, the Assembly Chamber was used to communicate political support for those involved in the front-line of the crisis response. Debates and other plenary functions allowed an opportunity to promote a ‘united front’ during the epidemic. The Welsh Assembly, therefore, was thought to be an important mechanism for the communication of a symbolic show of solidarity between the executive parties, WAG officials, and the Opposition.

Importantly, key WAG officials explained that these two types of plenary communication helped to generate public confidence in the crisis response and emphasised the legitimacy of crisis managers:

What we were looking for and what we got was support, politically and administratively and I think that often went unrecognised. So although directly they [AMs] didn’t do that much you might argue, I personally feel that although they would give us a rough time in committee or in debates, they were testing to understand what we were doing and then legitimising it publicly. (interview, WAG Official B)

The Chairman of the Assembly’s Agriculture and Rural Development Committee also maintained that the Assembly Chamber could be used to send out supportive messages on disease control and bio-security. The key, according to the Chairman, was to ‘grandstand’ in the Chamber, so that the media would pick up on the underlying message beneath the sound-bite:

It [the Chamber] does contribute, clever politicians and I’m as guilty as

anybody, if they want to get something out can use it. I'll use that Chamber and very often I'll look for the 'line' and have a press conference because you have to find a way to get stuff out. You tell them [the media] if you're going to say something before and they keep in touch and on that [FMD] they were and I did a terrific amount of stuff with the media then because I knew they were looking for stuff and I had a lot of advice. I remember them [reporters] ringing me up one day and asking me about some person that had been going round offering Foot and Mouth for so much, saying if you want Foot and Mouth, the compensation is so good, we can deliver you Foot and Mouth for so much money. I remember standing up in a debate and it went out live on air and I said I thought they should string him up by piano wire from the tallest tree attached to the most tender part of his body. That got a lot of coverage but that was a serious issue. I actually think that this Assembly used it quite well, the Chamber itself is quite useful. (interview, Glyn Davies)

Scottish interviewees were generally more willing to state that the Scottish Parliament communicated reassurance and solidarity than their Welsh and English counterparts. All the Scottish interviewees with an interest in FMD maintained that the Parliament performed an important role in this sense (interviews, Alex Fergusson, Elaine Murray, John Scott, SE Officials A, B). The evidence from Scotland differentiates the Scottish Parliament from the other two assemblies because its communications aimed to reassure those affected that the political system was 'listening' *and* that the Scottish Executive was 'in control'.

Elaine Murray was a Labour MSP who represented an area affected by FMD. Mrs. Murray explained that Scottish Parliament debates provided an opportunity to show those affected that MSPs were listening and concerned:

I think at the time when it was first stated that there was Foot and Mouth there was a consensus that things had to be done, painful as it was. There would be a number of things that we had to communicate. Reassurance is one but without complacency because people are under pressure, they need to think that people are actually listening to what is happening to them and not that they are too blunt or too complacent. As far as constituency people are concerned, a certain role is to represent the pain and to describe what is happening. It is good that somebody is talking about the pain they are going through. I think that's important in a number of circumstances not just issues where a major crisis affects a number of people but even when you're discussing social workers or whatever ... it is important for people who work in the front line in difficult circumstances to hear elected representatives talk about their experiences.

(interview, Elaine Murray)

The ability of the Scottish Parliament to communicate reassurance and solidarity was also confirmed by two senior SEERAD members who were involved in the management of the crisis (interviews, SE Officials A, B). One of these officials was asked to summarise the most important function performed by the Scottish Parliament during the crisis:

It certainly has effects, mostly in terms of giving reassurance at a national level. ... nationally it gave the reassurance to the population at large that we were in control ... If they [MSPs] think you're doing a bad job the support will disappear like snow off a dyke and what we were able to do was get the message over that we were doing a good job, that things were going well, that it was going in the right direction. It was about giving the feeling to people that there was people running the thing that knew what they were doing and they were getting it right. That was the most important thing that the national Parliament could do for us.
(interview, SE Official B)

Alex Fergusson, a Conservative MSP who represented a constituency affected by FMD, was asked whether Scottish Parliament debates could reduce conflict. Instead of supporting the claims related to deliberation (see below), Mr. Fergusson's response suggested that the nature of the crisis and the age of the new Parliament led to solidarity being expressed between the Opposition, the backbenches and the Scottish Executive. This argument was reiterated by all of the Scottish FMD interviewees:

There was, just as there was down in Dumfries and Galloway, almost a sort of war-time mentality of support which had built up within the Parliament ... although we heard all the arguments for vaccination, we heard all the conflicts, I think within the Parliament we almost didn't allow the conflict to enter into the Parliament because of the determination to see off the first crisis that we had in the Parliament's history. I actually think if it happened again now or even if another crisis came along we'd be more sure of ourselves if you like to actually allow a conflict or different arguments to enter into the Parliament but I do think that the fact that we were very, very young played a large part in how determined we were to not allow any conflict to enter the parliamentary circle because, other than the odd concern raised, there was really whole backing for the Minister in all the actions he took rightly or wrongly. I do think if Foot and Mouth happened again it would be a very different story. I wouldn't be as complacent as I was about the cull although I was arguing for it at the time. I

think what was terribly important at that time was to send out a really strong message to a lot of those engaged in the conflict saying, “look, this is the way the Executive has chosen to get on top of this, we are very fortunate in Scotland that it’s confined to one small geographic area, lets make absolutely certain, as this is the chosen method of the Executive, that it’s carried out as quickly as possible so that its impact will be confined as much as possible” and I think that was a cross party thing almost across the board ... There was a robust lead given by the Executive and the local authorities involved and that robustness was echoed by the Parliament. (interview, Alex Fergusson)

The Fuel Protests

Four fuel protest interviewees, from a potential 11, gave an indication that the parliaments were important because they communicated reassurance or solidarity during the crisis. Michael Connarty was a Labour MP who represented the constituency of Linlithgow and East Falkirk, which was the location of one fuel refinery blockade in September 2000. Mr. Connarty claimed that the UK Parliament was important because it provided a public platform through which the concerns of those with a legitimate grievance were acknowledged. Accordingly, these groups

Were happier that people had heard what they had to say, that people understood their case, that we understood what was happening in their community and their workforces and their own businesses, and the fragility of that. The idea was given that they had had a good hearing and they had been recognised as a group with a legitimate concern. So the role of Parliament in all of that is in providing a platform for groups to articulate ... having debates on it allows some people to posture but also allows a number of people to say “look even in the context of what we’ve been elected to do, it’s [fuel duty] hitting the rural communities hard, it’s hitting the small companies hard, surely we can do something to moderate that”. I didn’t do it for that reason, but looking at it objectively it was about letting people get their message over and feel that their message had been listened to. (interview, Michael Connarty)

Kenny MacAskill was an SNP MSP who provided representation for the Road Haulage Association (RHA) during the fuel crisis. When asked if the Scottish Parliament was important in a symbolic sense during the crisis, he claimed that debates allowed the SNP to reassure the protestors that their concerns were being listened to. This, he argued, was something that the Scottish Executive refused to do because of the reserved nature of fuel

duty (interview, Kenny MacAskill). Mr. MacAskill's evidence correlates closely with Michael Connarty's in the sense that both MP and MSP were reassuring certain protestors (the groups that each believed to be legitimate) that their views had been represented within the political system:

Part of a democracy is not necessarily getting your way but it's having your voice heard and what was important was for me to sustain the RHA and for the RHA to say, "well at least some politicians are listening to us". It is important that people's voices are heard, so I think for the RHA to hear, "the Tories are saying this, they're on board, Kenny MacAskill and the SNP are saying this and they're on board, and backbenchers are saying that" helps to defuse tensions. Otherwise you have people that do feel that they are ostracized from the body politic and that they are not participating and nobody in politics is listening and therefore that spirals into actions that go out-with the democratic process. ... So debates are symbolic, yeah, our role was basically to give some political legitimacy to the protestors to make sure that their voice was being heard and that they knew they were not just by themselves and I think we have learned from that, it has added to our democracy. (interview, Kenny MacAskill)

A WAG official, responsible for aspects of the response to the fuel protests, explained that crises often provoke Assembly Members to sympathise publicly with front-line staff, associate with those affected, and declare that the emergency services are doing a good job (interview, WAG Official A). Another AM who was a member of the Environment Planning and Transport (EPT) Committee during the fuel protests corroborated this official's view in a general sense by arguing that Assembly Members 'flagging up support' for people on the front-line was 'a common feature of political discourse when there is a crisis' (interview, John Griffiths). However, the official involved in the fuel crisis response stated that this form of support, precisely because of its ritualistic nature, was often, 'hollow; it's just about going through the motions and delivering routine political rhetoric' (interview, WAG Official A). Shows of solidarity during crises were compared to the way in which politicians speak about problems in the NHS. Sharp political criticisms of NHS organisation and policy, it was argued, are ubiquitously preceded by routine pledges of support for those doctors and nurses on the front line. This official felt that this also happened during crises

and that the rhetoric of support, in this case, did not translate into tangible political actions which supported WAG officials or policy (interview, WAG Official A).

The English Exam Crisis

Oliver Heald was a Conservative backbench MP at the time of the English exam crisis and he represented a number of constituents who were affected by the exam grading problems. Mr. Heald was the only English exam interviewee (from a total of six) to state that Westminster enacted symbolic rituals. In his opinion the Opposition debate that focused on the A-level re-gradings was important because it reassured his constituents to know, 'that the whole sorry picture had been put forward to the Government and that hopefully it would not happen again' (interview, Oliver Heald). This, therefore, can be considered to be another incidence of representatives assuring those affected by crises that their concerns had been acknowledged within the political system.

The Scottish Exam Crisis

In Scotland, three (out of four) interviewees argued that ministerial statements and committee scrutiny were important in terms of the communication of reassurance during the crisis (interviews, Cathie Peattie, Marilyn Livingstone, SE Official E). As far as Cathie Peattie was concerned, these statements were ritualistic because the Ministers who were attempting to reassure the affected families 'did not have a clue what was going on' (interview, Cathie Peattie). More important in terms of generating public reassurance was the fact that the Parliament had sent out its own independent message about an inquiry, which meant, 'that the people who had taken these decisions were seen to be held to account' (interview, Cathie Peattie). In the eyes of Marilyn Livingstone, ministerial statements were important for public reassurance during that period because, 'rumours had started to fly' (interview, Marilyn Livingstone). A senior official who had significant crisis

management duties within the Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) during the crisis agreed that the committee inquiries would have helped to reassure those affected. The same official also repeatedly stressed the importance of ministerial statements in this regard (interview, SE Official E). When asked if the statements were effective at reaching the public in comparison to the media, this official emphasised the symbolic importance of the Parliament as a location for crisis management communications:

The minister had to make a statement to the Parliament. Things had blown up to that extent. It was a level of crisis which meant that he couldn't possibly decline to make a statement to Parliament. It's the right place to do it. Sounding off in the media is one thing, talking to all kinds of groups in all kinds of settings; these things will all also happen but when a Minister stands up and speaks to the Parliament it has an authority, it has a significance that these other kinds of communication do not ... To me it was very important that he was seen to be speaking to Parliament. Then it gets picked up and reported and misreported and whatever it gets, the Opposition will have a go at it. We put a lot into that statement and an enormous amount into the submissions to the inquiry to make sure everything was accurate and complete because Parliament has its place, it is on behalf of the people of Scotland, holding the Minister and the Minister's officials to account and demanding to know what happened and why it was allowed to happen and so on and it's right and proper that Parliament is the place that gets these statements. Whether in the end that's the best way to get to the people, I don't know but that is the system that we have. They are the people's representatives and they must be catered to. Making a statement to the Parliament is a statesmanlike act. Giving a statement to the Daily Record is OK but it's not the same kind of thing at all. (interview, Scottish Executive Official E)

However, the Conservative Education Spokesman during the exam crisis, Brian Monteith, argued that it was not important that statements were made within the Scottish Parliament. According to Mr. Monteith, (a vociferous unionist) the communication of reassurance, 'could have been made anywhere, it's the content not the location that's most important when it comes to a statement during a crisis' (interview, Brian Monteith).

Rituals of Solidarity and Reassurance: Summary

The House of Commons, the Welsh Assembly, and the Scottish Parliament all produced symbolic outputs during these crises which were relevant to their management. This finding,

therefore, represents another series of inter-institutional similarities relating to the involvement of parliaments in periods of crisis. Each representative assembly either reassured affected citizens that their executives were 'in control' or that their concerns had been 'input' into the political system. Symbolic shows of solidarity between crisis leaders and elected representatives were also communicated by the Welsh Assembly, the Scottish Parliament and Westminster although the extent to which they were hollow or meaningful was questioned.

The communication of reassurance and solidarity during crises can be considered important to those who study parliaments because they are functions consistently performed by all UK parliaments during crises. The ways in which these symbolic outputs are produced and communicated, and the effects that they have in relation to crisis management, have never been studied directly within the parliamentary field despite this fact. This finding, therefore, opens up new research opportunities for parliamentary scholars by uncovering a relatively untouched area of study. Parliamentary involvement in the communication of rituals of reassurance and solidarity can also be considered to be important to those who practice and study crisis management. This importance can be seen through the contributors who stated that symbolic outputs can affect legitimacy and support dynamics. In particular, the contributions of those tasked with managing the FMD crisis are important. Their revelations that parliamentarians helped to communicate- 'that the [Welsh] government knows what it is about and is taking control and leading the fight', and that the Scottish Executive was 'doing a good job', 'knew what they were doing' and 'were getting it right' - indicate how a parliament can help generate positive evaluations of specific crisis management authorities. Essentially, these symbolic outputs were believed by officials to reinforce their own pre-existing legitimate status. In other words, they were one element (alongside actual performance) which ensured that Welsh and Scottish officials would be perceived as

operating within the 'definable range' of acceptable behaviour during an uncertain period. This finding is important because it is the first empirical substantiation of the proposition that representative assemblies can influence the legitimacy of specific crisis management authorities during crisis episodes.

The differences between the cases and the parliaments are also interesting. Evidence of cross-party communications of solidarity was only found in relation to the FMD crisis. The severity of the threat posed by each crisis may be one reason for this. Few politicians attempt to make political capital out of crises characterised by significant threat levels because of the risk of angering public opinion. The exam and fuel crises were more divisive than the FMD epidemic because their comparative lack of threat meant that the opposition members could attempt to make political gains from their occurrence. This distinguishes them from the FMD crisis where the need to express a 'united front' was seen as an important element in the crisis response (even in England before evidence of mismanagement emerged). There is also a vivid contrast between the legislatures in terms of the willingness of members to offer support to the crisis management efforts of their executives. The incidences when Opposition members did not communicate solidarity, support and reassurance show parliamentarians behaving 'normally' and parliaments acting as forums for the expression of party political conflict. Why were Scottish and Welsh parliamentarians more willing to offer symbolic support than their English peers? Crisis *mismanagement* is one explanation. Welsh and Scottish representatives were more willing to support their executives during the FMD crisis simply because they were more effective at controlling the disease than MAFF. The validity of this argument is reflected in the fact that UK Opposition members supported MAFF and the Agriculture Minister in the initial stages of the crisis yet withdrew their support as the disease control failures became apparent. The young age of the devolved assemblies is a second factor. Scottish and Welsh

parliamentarians believed that the legitimacy of their institutions was not fully established and could be affected if they did not publicly put party politics to one side. The devolved institutions were also built upon a concept of 'new' politics, which prescribed a more consensual parliamentary-executive relationship. The architects of the Scottish Parliament's principles, for example, declared prior to devolution that they had, 'the powerful hope that the coming of a Scottish Parliament will usher in a way of politics that is radically different from the rituals of Westminster: more participative, less needlessly confrontational ... [with] ... a culture of openness' (Scottish Constitutional Convention 1995: 9). Across the life of a parliament, idealistic principles, such as the concept of new politics, can become rationalised by political realities. Party politics can pervert an idealistic constitutional climate into one which reflects the *real politik* considerations of zero-sum politics (Marshall 1984: 11; Judge 1993:138-140). This gradual movement from prescriptive ideals to the realities of party politics is characterised by tighter executive control of the legislature and an increase in partisanship. As this shift occurs, it is likely that the willingness of parliamentarians across parties to communicate messages which support government authorities, even during crises, may reduce. A number of research projects, discussed in chapter three showed that in the first two parliamentary sessions of devolved life, Welsh and Scottish parliamentary practice has gradually started to reflect the norms of Westminster (Osmond 2000: 45; Winetrobe 2001: 2; SP Paper 818 2003: para. 1016; Shephard and Cairney 2005: 316). However, when these crises unfolded, the new assemblies would still have been imbued with a keen sense of the idealistic prescriptions that structured their creation. In other words, their young age meant that the slide between the ideal of consensual politics and the reality of partisanship would not have been as pronounced as in Westminster. This meant that the cultures within the devolved institutions (at that point in history) were conducive to the communication of symbolic forms of solidarity and reassurance.

Framing

Foot and Mouth

Twelve out of 17 FMD interviewees supplied evidence about parliamentary involvement in framing. Three examples of communication can be defined as attempts by the UK Government to frame the Foot and Mouth crisis in a more positive light. First, the Minister for Agriculture and the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) declared throughout March and April 2001 that their Ministry had the disease ‘under control’ (see for example, BBC 11 March 2001; 14 March 2001; 1 April 2001; 19 April 2001). After the first ‘under control’ announcement, made on 11 March, a further 1429 confirmed FMD infections were recorded over six months (HC 888 2002: 169). Evidence given to the Anderson Inquiry indicated that the ‘under control’ message was political, rather than scientific (HC 888: 2002, Annex, 23 April, para.25), and that it was misleading:

It is understandable that the Minister should have sought to reassure the public about control measures already in place. However, his comments did not reflect the situation on the ground. The disease was, at this stage, out of control by any reasonable measure ... The Minister’s comments contributed to the loss of trust on the part of rural communities. Many people, including some of those directly involved in managing the outbreak, still find it difficult to reconcile their experiences during this period with the notion of the disease being under control. (HC 888 2002: 79-81)

Second, the Prime Minister along with his Chief Scientific Advisor and the CVO asserted, during a Downing Street press conference in May that the country was in the ‘home straight’ in terms of disease control (BBC 3 May 2001). This statement was bolstered by the presentation of statistics which suggested that the number of new infections was dropping. The Prime Minister’s announcement was viewed, by members of the farming and tourism industries and in certain sections of the press, as an attempt to remove FMD from the agenda ahead of the re-scheduled general election (BBC 3 May 2001; The Independent 5 May

2001). Between May and July alone, 210 farms were recorded as infected and a further 534 farms had uninfected stock slaughtered (HC 888 2002: 169). A DEFRA official responsible for one operational response in an English region confirmed that during the epidemic these messages from the centre were met with local incredulity (interview, UK Official H). An extract from one of the Anderson Inquiry's public meetings highlights the frustration felt locally towards these communications:

Night after night on television news we had Jim Scudamore [CVO] or Mr. Brown [Agriculture Minister], sometimes the Prime Minister, Professor King [Chief Scientific Advisor], it is under control, it is completely under control, it is definitely under control and we felt absolutely insulted and patronised by these lies that we were told. And furthermore it did a great deal of lasting damage because it meant that we are all now so completely cynical about anything the Government says. It has destroyed trust, trust takes years and years to build up and it can be destroyed overnight, and that is one thing that happened. (HC 888 2002: 81)

Third, the government's statistics were criticised for not revealing the extent to which uninfected animals were being slaughtered by only publishing details of infection (HC 363-i 2001; HC 363-111 2001; HC 363-iv 2001). This meant that the extent of the slaughter was significantly downplayed because culls of healthy livestock were not being reported in an easily accessible manner. For example, a single farm may have several different holdings scattered across a large geographical area. If one of these holdings became infected all the farm's sites were culled, yet only one case of infection would be recorded. The remaining sites were then recorded as Dangerous Contact (DC) culls. Contiguous, Dangerous Contact and Slaughter on Suspicion (SOS) cull statistics were only given out on request. The difference in statistics is startling after pre-emptive culls are added to official infections. For example, by 23 April 1440 farms had been reported officially as 'infected and slaughtered' (the correct number of infections at this point was actually confirmed post-crisis as 1512) yet when the pre-emptive culls are added, the number of 'slaughtered' premises was actually 4950 (HC 363-i 2001: q.273). The selective presentation of statistics allowed the

government to show a decline in new infections in May while the number of livestock being killed pre-emptively actually rose. Across the whole epidemic, 2030 premises were officially recorded as infected yet 10,157 farms had livestock destroyed (HC 888 2002: 169).

These three examples of framing were presented to the parliamentarians interviewed as attempts to frame public perceptions or mask the realities of under-performing policies. The respondents were then asked whether or not they felt that the UK Parliament was used to communicate these kinds of message and whether or not the Parliament had managed to communicate a version of events that was more independent or accurate (DEFRA policy officials declined to discuss these issues).

Only one respondent, a Conservative spokesman, insinuated that Parliament had been used repeatedly by the Government to communicate inaccurate presentations of events on the ground (interview, Owen Paterson). However, this accusation was not repeated by any other interviewed MP regardless of party affiliation. The remaining four backbenchers maintained that the Government had attempted to frame aspects of the epidemic but refuted the suggestion that Parliament was used to communicate those kinds of message (interviews, David Borrow, David Curry, Lembit Opik, Mark Todd). For example, Lembit Opik, who was a member of the Agriculture Select Committee during the epidemic, stated that the government:

Talked up their statistics and gave them more credibility and reliability than was fair and then not surprisingly they lost credibility in the process. It didn't take a genius to find out the truth. I don't think that the House of Commons was used to communicate those kinds of messages very much. The governmental media machine was very busy transmitting these messages. (interview, Lembit Opik)

The remaining MPs also indicated that the Government used the mass media, rather than Parliament, to frame the crisis. The opinion of these MPs was reinforced by Hansard

transcripts. No reference is made by ministers in the House to the disease being 'under control' in March or a 'home straight' being reached in May. In both cases, these 'sound-bites' were released through the press rather than Parliament - the 'under control' message was made initially on *Breakfast with Frost* and the 'home straight' announcement was made at a press conference. Indeed, as the farmer quoted above recalled, these messages were appearing 'night after night on television news'.

All the five MPs stated that they had attempted to use Parliament to convey a more accurate assessment of the disease control situation. The minutes from the Agriculture Select Committee reinforce these claims. They show that the members repeatedly challenged the Minister, the CVO and the Scientific Advisory Team about the presentation of statistics (HC 363-i 2001: q.28-43; HC 363-iii 2001: q.273-278; HC 363 iv 2001: q.396). The Agriculture Minister was also criticised in the Chamber for the 'under control' and 'home straight' statements as well as MAFF's use of statistics (see for example HC Debs., 9 April 2001, vol.366 col.708; 3 May 2001, vol. 367, col.1008). Although these examples highlight that Parliament can be a venue for publicising alternative versions of events, its effectiveness as a communication channel capable of influencing public perceptions must be questioned. In this sense, Owen Paterson's opinion diverges from the rest of the interviewed MPs again. Only Mr. Paterson felt that Parliament, or more particularly the Agriculture Committee, was an effective counter-framing tool. Asked whether or not Parliament was able to communicate a more accurate assessment of disease control, Mr. Paterson replied:

The Chamber is a very bad place to try and do it. The minister makes a 'hack' speech and our side had to be very careful, and Tim Yeo [Agriculture Spokesman] was always very careful to give a measured response but our side asked some pretty tricky questions but we don't have any comeback on what is said and all you can do is sit back and jeer. I remember very distinctly raising the PCR [FMD detection equipment] question and it was just dismissed with a very childish response. The better weapon for me was the Select Committee ... in that situation you've got a minister on the run and that's televised and I was pretty good at

always going to the press and telling them that I was going to raise this issue and that issue and making sure that people were watching the telly. (interview, Owen Paterson)

This optimistic appraisal of Parliament was not shared by the other interviewees. For example, Mark Todd wryly observed that:

The initial reaction which was demonstrated by the removal of the Minister and the reorganisation of the Department showed that this was a major failure of British public policy. I think that was fair; there were failures. I was making criticisms at the time but I was doing it in Parliament, which is one way of making sure your criticisms are not heard terribly well across the country. (interview, Mark Todd)

Lembit Opik, when asked whether the Agriculture Committee or individual MPs managed to convey counter-balancing messages out to the public, replied that the, 'general public remained completely confused by the whole thing. They didn't understand ... the public knew there was a bad crisis in the countryside and that was it' (interview, Lembit Opik).

The same three examples of government framing were reiterated to Welsh FMD respondents. They were then asked whether the Assembly was used by the WAG to communicate those kinds of messages and whether members had attempted to communicate alternative versions of events. The FMD findings from Westminster were closely replicated. No AM indicated that the Assembly was used by the WAG to send out selectively framed messages. Senior officials who led the crisis response also maintained that they did not believe that the Assembly was an effective forum for sending out symbolic messages or selective interpretations of events (interviews, WAG Officials, B, C). As one official stated:

If you're talking about pretty seminal messages like 'top ten tips on bio-security' or 'open for business'; those are messages that you have to 'hit' the public with and how many of the public watch plenary sessions? They probably have got better things to do, particularly if they're in the midst of a crisis and trying to shore up their farms. You have to use the channels that are going to get at most people; local radio, local media, face to face discussions, getting out

there and talking to them. No, I don't think plenary is a good place for that.
(interview, WAG Official C)

These interviewees also argued that the Assembly was a vehicle for counter-balancing UK Executive messages within Wales. This is an interesting point. Assembly members disregarded the reserved nature of animal disease policy in order to counter-balance what they perceived to be misleading communications from Whitehall. For example, the Chair of the ARDC spoke about Nick Brown's attempt to frame the disease as 'under control' as:

Rubbish, complete rubbish ... In Wales, nobody did believe it and I think the existence of the Assembly counterbalanced it. I mean I was on the television nearly every day myself being interviewed. Apart from the Minister, I was probably on the telly the most and in some ways I was often seen as his deputy which is an odd thing because we're from two different parties. I was openly contemptuous and that was being articulated, that things were not happening.
(interview, Glyn Davies)

The Scottish interviewees were given the same examples and asked the same questions as the English and Welsh participants. These interviewees presented a different opinion of the concept of framing. Two senior SEERAD officials and one MSP indicated that if framing was defined as the communication of a selective or contestable interpretation of events, the Parliament was not involved. However, they did contend that the Parliament's plenary procedures were one element in a larger communication strategy used to send out sound-bites about disease control. For example, one official stated:

Things like the 'countryside's open' was a very important message because a lot of people thought it was closed. It's all about sound-bites really. A parliamentary debate might go on for three quarters of an hour or an hour and what do they [the media] pick up from that? Well, they pick up maybe two or three things that might get on the six o'clock news and if that's one of them, the sort of core message, that's important, and sometimes it's done by repeating the same message over and over again in Parliament. So yes, I think especially with Parliament being televised and certainly since devolution the amount of reporting done on the Scottish Parliament is quite large, so it's very open.
(interview, SE Official B)

Two more officials, both unconnected to the specific cases but with contingencies and crisis management responsibilities, also raised the argument that framing was an inappropriate term. They argued that it was acceptable that parliamentary debates (interview, SE Official D) and certain accountability processes (interview, SE Official C) would be used to get sound-bite messages out to the public during crises. According to one official:

Scrutiny mechanisms can provide opportunities to send out messages. There is such a thing as the inspired PQ so a statement might be made by a minister. They wouldn't need then to have a personal statement in the Parliament orally, they would get a friendly backbencher to table a question, you know "what is the Executive going to do about xyz" and then there is a prepared statement that is put out on the back of that. So that's one mechanism but yeah we might use a PQ that comes in by chance. It's unlikely that you would use that to make a major announcement about a major departure but you can certainly in the answers to PQ's put out important signals about where the Executive wants to go in a crisis situation that is dynamic. (interview, SE Official C)

The Scottish FMD interviewees were also unwilling to assert that the Parliament was used by MSPs to 'counter-frame' Scottish or UK Executive interpretations. An indicative example of these responses is given below. When the subject of framing and counter-framing was raised, Alex Fergusson MSP explained:

That wasn't the case up here as much as it was in Westminster again partly because it [the disease] was much more confined, partly because Ross Finnie [Agriculture Minister] was generally perceived to be robust in his actions and decisive and have a firm grip on the tiller. That was the perception at the time and also of course we had the whole business down south that it was postponing the election, and I suspect that all that spin was used to present a picture, regardless of the fact that two thirds of the country is covered by this dreadful disease, that the election could go ahead. I guess a lot of it was coloured by the fact that there was an election coming up, there was quite a lot electorally at stake. At the end of the day I don't think it swayed the election that much. It was fascinating to observe that once the date for the election was set Foot and Mouth virtually stopped but I don't think that took place as much up here as it did in Westminster. I go back to the fact that we were a new institution and this was our first crisis. There was only a 129 members up here so at that stage we were all getting to know each other reasonably well and there was a feeling of "we've got to do whatever it takes, whether we like it or not to stop the damn thing spreading". (interview, Alex Fergusson)

A number of factors were offered by the interviewees which explain why Scottish parliamentary members, unlike their Welsh and UK counterparts, did not engage in framing conflicts. First, the Scottish Executive's disease control measures were generally viewed as appropriate and effective. Second, neither Ministers nor SEERAD officials attempted to communicate controversial interpretations of disease control. Third, the political stakes were not as high because Scottish parliamentary elections were not imminent. These factors were also applicable to the Welsh Assembly. However, in Scotland animal disease control was a fully devolved competence. This meant that the framing messages that emanated from Whitehall, which caused a hostile response from Welsh Assembly Members, did not apply to Scotland. Members of the Scottish Parliament had no need to challenge those communications as they did not pertain to Scotland or the performance of SEERAD. Another reason for the lack of counter-framing by parliamentary members may be found in the relationship between the media and the Scottish Parliament. According to one MSP:

One of the things that was and is frustrating is not being able to get serious consideration of what's happening outside through the media. It's difficult to get a serious debate through the media in Scotland. I don't think it's as bad in the UK media. I think there is a problem with the media here. We have too small a media, too insular a media to get some of the serious debate reflected. ... All the stories that come out are generally very lazy stories based on, for example, press releases by the Opposition that are not very factually correct. It's very difficult to get factual stuff out, actual serious arguments or information that informs a sensible debate. (interview, Elaine Murray)

The Fuel Crisis

The fuel protests represent an interesting case in terms of framing. All the interviewees concerned with this crisis claimed that their respective parliament was involved in aspects of framing. This unanimity is particularly interesting given that the crisis was short-lived and Westminster was in recess during its acute-stage. However, outside of Parliament the political rhetoric often revolved around the symbolic principles of the parliamentary system as the UK Government claimed that the protestors were a threat to parliamentary democracy,

the protestors claimed that their blockades were democracy in action, and the Opposition demanded the recall of Parliament. Post-event, after the parliamentary recess finished, these arguments were formalised in the Commons' Chamber.

Certainly the UK Government did engage in framing attempts during the acute-stage of the crisis. The attempt to frame the protestors as a threat to democracy is worth dwelling upon here because, although no parliamentary procedure was used to frame the fuel protests, the idea that the protestors were challenging the principles of parliamentary democracy was an argument used repeatedly by Ministers across Great Britain and eventually by the larger trade unions. For example, Jack Straw told the BBC that acceding to the protestors demands would be 'the clearest possible message that we had abandoned parliamentary democracy' (BBC 12 September 2000a). Bill Morris, then President of the TUC, also declared that, 'the real democratic deficit is about people who were never elected claiming to speak on behalf of the nation' (BBC 29 September 2000). In chapter three it was proposed that the 'legitimising mythology' of the Westminster model of government - essentially its symbolic principles - could be manipulated instrumentally to develop specific support for authorities. The fuel protests show a government using the symbolism of parliamentary democracy to vilify those engaged in direct action and enhance support for their policy of non-negotiation. Although Westminster was in recess during the acute stage, the 'myths' of parliamentary democracy that Parliament embodies were used as part of the government's rhetorical armoury. The Opposition, however, also attempted to use the symbolism of Parliament to counter the Government's stance. William Hague, for example, demanded a parliamentary recall by stating that the protests had arisen, 'because Tony Blair never ever listens to people ... he should be brought to the one place where ministers have to listen and account for their actions' (BBC 14 September 2000). The unfortunate irony for Hague, according to Robinson (2003), was that his demand provided a tacit form of support for the Government's

position because it heightened the sense of crisis and placed pressure on the protestors to end their action. The protestors themselves also asserted that they were actually enhancing the democratic health of the nation by giving a voice to an unhappy and disenfranchised civil society. Brynle Williams was a protest leader at the Stanlow refinery. He stated that when the Government articulated their parliamentary democracy argument, 'my reaction was that this was democracy: that the people were responding' (interview, Brynle Williams). Regardless of the effect of these communications, what they show is that the symbolic principles of UK parliamentary democracy were an important part of the rhetorical framing efforts of those who had a stake in the crisis. All four interviewed MPs agreed that the Government used the rhetoric of parliamentary democracy to frame the protests in a certain light (interviews, Brian Donohoe, Michael Connarty, Andrew Miller, Gwyneth Dunwoody). However, there was a division of opinion about whether this was an appropriate approach. Michael Connarty can be distinguished from the other interviewees who all believed that the government's argument was correct:

I know the Government took that line and it worried me because I don't think it legitimises Parliament to say that extra-parliamentary protest is wrong and everything must be decided in that Chamber in a formal parliamentary way. I don't think that's correct, but I do think the Government was very skilful in emphasising the impact on the general public ... it was really the Executive rather than Parliament that won that battle. It was the skill of the spin doctors and the communicators and the media people on the Government side that got that message over to undermine their credibility. (interview, Michael Connarty)

The protestors gave the Government a 60 day deadline after the end of the blockades. If no concessions were made in this period a second series of protests were threatened. In response to this, the Government continued to describe the protestors pejoratively. The continuation of this rhetoric in the post-event stage meant that the floor of the Commons was used as a governmental framing mechanism. For example, Jack Straw continued to define the protestors as a threat to parliamentary democracy:

There are limits to peaceful protests. As for who runs Britain in a democratic society, it is a matter for Parliament and government. It is a matter for Parliament, through the ballot box, in reflecting the will of the people. There are many ways in which people can democratically express either their support for or opposition to the Government of the day. I celebrate, support and defend those avenues, but blocking motorways is not one of them. (HC Debs., 2 November 2000, vol. 355, col.849).

After the recess, the Conservatives did challenge the Government's vilification of the protestors and repeatedly attempted to argue that the protests were peaceful (see for example, HC Debs., 25 October 2000, vol.355 col. 231-232; 2 November 2000, vol. 355, col.840). By this time, however, the framing contest could be considered to be somewhat academic as the protests were over.

Asked if Parliament had the potential to counter-balance government framing in this period, the Chair of the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Select Committee suggested that select committees can influence those interested if they are picked up by the media:

You can do it. Challenges can be made. It depends, if nobody ever reports what you say and the press rather neatly suppress, not in a conscious way to suppress, but they don't print that, then you are in some difficulty but it does get through sometimes. I find that, for instance, the provincial press is much more inclined to print a more detailed report and you can get through to people. (interview, Gwyneth Dunwoody)

However, on this occasion the Committee did not get involved, 'because it was an immediate crisis - it was short and sharp and the Government dealt with it effectively' (interview, Gwyneth Dunwoody).

Ministers across Great Britain supported the UK Government's attempts to frame the fuel protests as a danger to lives. The Welsh Health Minister at the time, Jane Hutt, is on record arguing that lives were at risk because of fuel shortages within Welsh hospitals (BBC 13

September 2000). The Environment and Transport Secretary, Sue Essex, communicated two statements to the Assembly during the acute stage of the protests (Welsh Assembly *Record* 12 September 2000, 14 September 2000) and The First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, delivered a statement after the crisis (Welsh Assembly *Record*, 10 October 2000). Sections of each statement supported the UK Government's framing rhetoric. Unsurprisingly, all the Welsh interviewees connected to the fuel protests - three Assembly Members and one official - claimed that the Assembly was used in WAG attempts to influence public perceptions of the protests (interviews, Brynle Williams, John Marek, John Griffiths, WAG Official A). A WAG official at the centre of the policy and operational responses to the crisis conceded that the UK and Welsh government had attempted to 'flip' public perceptions of the protestors 'from heroes to villains' and that Cardiff Bay had been used as a communication channel to attempt this (interview, WAG Official A). Parliamentary questions in particular were an effective channel, according to this interviewee, because it was easy to 'second guess' the kind of questions that would be asked and then 'nail them' so as to put out a clear political message. Ministerial statements were also defined as useful because ministers are asked questions at the end of each statement. Officials could, therefore, prepare a Minister in a way that ensured that each rebuttal 'grandstanded a message' (interview, WAG Official A). However, this official stressed, in a similar way to the members of the Agriculture Department, that although plenary procedures were viewed as important because they were televised and watched by key stakeholders, the Assembly was not the most important route for framing. The WAG could 'hit' some of the more interested parties via the Assembly but it was far less important than media briefings, which reached the general public (interview, WAG Official A). Three AMs also supported the claim that the Assembly was used to communicate selective government interpretations of the crisis. Brynle Williams, the leader of one protest, for example, stated that that 'they [the UK Government] tried through the media to destroy us'. Asked whether or not the Assembly was communicating those kinds

of messages to the public, he replied, 'yes, all the time' (interview, Brynle Williams).

No interviewee suggested that the Assembly was significant in terms of counter-framing. Examination of the Assembly's Official Record indicates that the AMs who did participate in the questioning of ministers did not challenge the Welsh Executive's framing rhetoric in any significant way. Only two Conservative members contested the claim that the protests were not peaceful (Welsh Assembly *Record*, 10 October 2000). Apart from these instances, the Assembly was not used as a platform for counter-framing the interpretations of UK and Welsh ministers. If anything, the statements made by most AMs reinforced the sense that this was a serious crisis as they continually publicised specific constituency problems related to fuel shortages (see Welsh Assembly *Record*, 12 September 2000).

The Scottish First Minister (Donald Dewar) and the Scottish Justice Minister (Jim Wallace) both used the Scottish Parliament to communicate support for the UK Government's framing rhetoric. The First Minister argued emphatically that the protests were a threat to parliamentary democracy (SPOR 14 September 2000: col.346) while the Justice Minister claimed that lives would be put at risk if the NHS fuel situation worsened (SPOR 13 September 2000, col.243). For example, Donald Dewar told the Scottish Parliament that:

The Government cannot be stampeded into instant decisions. That would be unfortunate and, when people had time to think about the matter, would greatly diminish confidence in the stability and good sense of our parliamentary system. (SPOR 14 September 2000: col.346)

Unsurprisingly, the claim that the Scottish Parliament was an executive framing tool was supported by all three MSPs interviewed in relation to the protests (interviews, Kenny MacAskill, John Scott, Cathie Peattie). According to Kenny MacAskill, the Scottish Executive's stance increased the sense of anger amongst the protestors:

A lot of Labour backbenchers and a lot of the Executive saw the RHA and these truckers as people who were out to undermine a Labour government who were basically Tories ... A lot of these people were condemned by Labour in Westminster and they would have been standing shoulder to shoulder with them but because they owned their own truck they were seen as capitalists. They were basically just people whose businesses were going under and who were making a legitimate point that Scottish manufacturing is disappearing. So a lot of the anger came from that hostility and prejudice ... it was rather bizarre that they wouldn't have treated a trade union demonstration that way but they perceived them differently. That was the line they took and they used the Parliament here to deliver it, although mostly they sat back and let Westminster do the talking. (interview, Kenny MacAskill)

The Scottish Parliament's Official Report records Opposition members repeatedly challenging the UK government's and Scottish Executive's interpretation of the protests (see for example SPOR 13 September 2000, col.203; SPOR 14 September 2000, col.343; SPOR 5 October, col.917; SPOR 26 April 2001, col.107). The frequency of counter-framing attempts and the number of parliamentarians confronting Scottish ministers distinguishes the Scottish Parliament from the Welsh Assembly. However, none of the interviewees considered the Parliament to be a particularly effective venue for influencing the opinion of the Scottish public. The testimony of Kenny MacAskill, who was the chief SNP protagonist during these debates, is particularly significant. Mr. MacAskill, who presented each Opposition motion and represented the SNP frontbench during each debate, believed that the most important counter-framing efforts occurred outside of the parliamentary arena:

Parliament was not really the forum. There were debates in which I participated where you could raise the issue to some extent, but the fuel protests was an extra-parliamentary battle; with the only real parliamentary involvement being a few debates sponsored by the SNP where we made some symbolic protests ... so how did the Parliament influence the public? The public caught on to the fact that it was government tax and the Parliament played a part, but only a part, of that much wider campaign. (interview, Kenny MacAskill)

The English Exam Crisis

All of the interviewees involved in this crisis argued that Parliament was a venue for framing

efforts, which affected public perceptions. Two clear themes emerged across these interviews. First, Parliament was a factor in a process of framing, which contributed to the assessment system's failures being defined as a crisis (five out of six interviewees). For example, a senior official involved in the crisis maintained that parliamentarians, who were influencing and being influenced by the media, escalated doubts in the assessment system:

Why is it important to think about how things play out in Parliament? It's because that will get reported and it's how important the media reporting would be that makes it so important. Parliament is a public forum and it's a public forum that behaves in the way it does, to a certain extent, because of the way it gets reported ... I still think it needn't have happened. When you saw the Tomlinson Report, the numbers of those affected were tiny, it wasn't as if he had uncovered some enormous gulf in what one person had said and somebody else had said. What he said was this wasn't quite right and actually I think you could examine the exam system in any year and find things that were not quite right, so the thing I think about it is that it all just blew up ... some events blow up and some events don't. This is one that blew up. Actually, not a lot happened. Things weren't very different that year from any other year. The difference was that you had all the other environmental conditions in place for that to flare up, and once it flared up then heads rolled. (interview, UK Official E)

Asked whether Parliament was one of the 'environmental conditions' that flared the crisis up, the official replied:

Yes, I think so. People get judged by a very narrow part of their life. You know it's incompetence but nobody takes into account all the competence they have experienced through that person. All they say is "we want people to do everything absolutely right" you don't find people saying "well on balance". (interview, UK Official E)

Hansard certainly records many instances where the Opposition over-emphasised the scale of the policy failure. For example, Damien Green, the Shadow Secretary of State for Education and Skills, stated that 88,000 pupils were affected by the crisis (HC Debs., 15 October 2002, vol. 390, col. 210), when the reality was that only 1,945 candidates had changes made to their grades (HC 153 2003, para.26).

It was also argued that the Government attempted to frame the QCA as blameworthy and that Parliament, again in conjunction with the media, played a part in that process:

The way Parliament behaves influences and is influenced by the way the media behaves. So you might think in certain circumstances that Parliament plays to the gallery as it were. In other cases you might think that the press is picking something up and making more of it than was intended. All of those things happen. The interaction between Parliament and the media, it's not one or the other, it's the one playing off the other. I think that the Department wanted someone to be responsible and I think that they would have been very happy if they found the QCA to be responsible because they don't want to be found responsible themselves and the QCA was in a good position to be the fall guy. I felt that I understood the issue very well because of the roles I'd been in and I think I know that the QCA wasn't at fault, that's my opinion, and I have used my own experience to form it. I think I said before about QCA treading this delicate line between wanting to be independent and wanting to survive and the Department and ministers are always going to be the bigger beasts in the jungle so if they want to frame it one way in Parliament... even if QCA wanted to frame it another way, they would find it very hard to do that. (interview, UK Official E)

The second theme to emerge across the interviews was a description of the Education and Skills Select Committee as an effective counter-framing mechanism, which counter-balanced the selective interpretation of events communicated by Government, Opposition and the media (six out of six interviewees). However, there was a divergence in opinion over the extent to which the Committee managed to influence perceptions outside of specifically affected publics. Paul Holmes, for example, argued that the Committee challenged the view that this was actually a crisis:

Mostly the Select Committee did do a fairly good job of saying "look we're backbench MPs we're not fighting a party line", so we did take the heat out of it to some extent because you didn't have an axe to grind and because you did have this whole procession of expert witnesses ... In that particular instance, it was a case of saying this has been over-hyped and over-blown and it's not really like that in reality. (interview, Paul Holmes)

Mr. Holmes also asserted that committees could influence the perceptions of specifically interested publics, such as pupils, parents and Head Teacher Associations, by influencing the

media:

With the press, it has more of a short-term effect. When select committee evidence is being taken on what the press regard as a 'sexy' topic, and it's quite noticeable which ones they are by looking at the public gallery, it can have quite a short-term hit because they will follow some of the inquiries week by week and report on it and they will follow the report's publication and you can get quite a lot of hits ... a lot of the Education Committee reports have had quite a lot of coverage, not just in the specialist press but in the mainstream as well. (interview, Paul Holmes)

However, one official who gave evidence to the Committee stated that although the Committee inquiry was rigorous and fair, it could not have influenced the general public because, 'you wouldn't have enough hours in the day to really dig down and understand things to that level of detail. I don't think people even know about select committees and reports and things like that' (interview, UK Official E). Parliamentary officials involved in the Inquiry repeatedly made the point that the Committee sought to counter the political machinations surrounding the crisis by presenting an accurate picture of events and explanations of how the assessment system actually operated. Asked whether the Committee had managed to achieve these aims, both officials said that the Inquiry had been successful in educating a number of journalists, many of whom used the Committee Report in future articles. This, they argued, indicated how a good inquiry can influence public perceptions and generate more considered analysis (interviews, UK Officials A, B). It was also argued that since the Report had been published, the annual public debate surrounding exam results had been more informed. However, when asked whether they felt that the Committee had managed to improve the understanding of the general public, both officials indicated that the Report impacted mainly within Westminster and amongst specific educationalist groups (interviews, UK Officials A, B). One official in particular was unsure about the extent to which the wider public, if not directly affected by a crisis, could be influenced by Parliament in this regard (interview, UK Official A).

The Scottish Exam Crisis

The MSPs involved in the two Committee inquiries into this crisis, while willing to argue that the inquiries were important in terms of establishing cause, culpability and shaping future policy, doubted that their activities significantly affected public perceptions (interviews, Marilyn Livingstone, Brian Monteith, Cathie Peattie). For example, the Deputy Convener of the ECSC was asked whether or not the Parliament's activities framed the crisis:

I think probably no. At the time we got really good coverage in the press. For example, we [the Committee] went to Hamilton and we got told by a woman what had happened to her and the media where there 'clicking' because they could put that into something they could sell. Then they had a story they could tell and they were interested in what we were doing to an extent. Whether that made a difference to what folk out there thought I'm not sure but I'm confident that we made a hell of a difference because we changed the way things happened and we formed the basis of legislation. (interview, Cathie Peattie)

A second MSP, a member of the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee, claimed that the Committee's proceedings and the individual MSP-constituent interactions that took place constituted, 'processes where you get into the real technical 'nitty gritty', which does counter-balance the politics of the Chamber' (interview, Marilyn Livingstone). This was considered by Mrs. Livingstone to be an example of how constituency interactions can frame perceptions on a one-to-one basis. However, this member also stressed that the general public's perception about what had happened (as opposed to affected individuals) was not greatly influenced by the Parliament's activities:

We tried as a Committee to communicate that evidence to the public but I'm not sure how successful we were at that. ... We're constituency MSPs and we were getting very worried parents at our surgery saying "what effect is this going to have? "What guarantee's do you have that this will be fixed?" and you know its these people that you can influence rather than the wider public. You can give them guarantees and set the record straight with them. (interview, Marilyn Livingstone)

The Conservative Education Spokesman during the crisis, Brian Monteith, also claimed that the Parliament itself did not influence public perceptions yet he did indicate that individuals affected by the crisis were influenced by the inquiries. According to Mr. Monteith:

There were two levels of public interaction. I was Education Spokesman and I was being contacted about lots of personal cases and there was the wider crisis of confidence in the education and assessment systems. Because of this I was doing a lot of interviews with the media. That was the route through which I could try and influence the agenda. The constituency information I received I could then use as anecdotal evidence against which ministerial and civil servant testimonies could be tested in the [Education] Committee. The Parliament was important because of the Committee, not because it influenced the general public perception in the way that the [media] interviews could, but because it created accountability and then allowed us to communicate a message back to those constituents that things were being fixed. (interview, Brian Monteith)

However, the SEED official who was involved in the crisis did not share the same opinion as the MSPs. This official stated repeatedly that certain Opposition MSPs, in conjunction with elements of the media, did play a significant role in escalating the crisis of confidence in the education system that summer (interview, SE Official E). Within the Parliament, there was:

A big party political push to have Sam Galbraith resign as Minister and it was interesting that everything focused on Sam. I do think that if all of the parties had closed ranks and said, "this is the Scottish education system, we will not allow it to fail" and there was a bit of that going on, there was a bit of "oh hell, Scottish education has this wonderful reputation and we're about to see it go up in smoke, let's do something". There were certainly people who were approaching it in that way, very seriously, puzzled at how it happened, determined to make sure it never happened again. That was there and real. If that had been it, I think it would have lessened the crisis. To what extent it was Parliament responding to the media or the media responding to the Parliament I couldn't tell, they were feeding off one another and it was escalating. It went on escalating. I couldn't believe how many days it was on the front page of the papers, with trumped up evidence as well. That was one thing which really annoyed me. Every single case that we found quoted in the national press or on the TV or radio, I investigated and we provided rebuttal on all of those because in almost all cases the story being told was not true. There may have been a mistake but it wasn't quite in the way being described. (interview, SE Official E)

The same official also stated that the media and the Opposition combined to construct stories

which became 'facts' even though they were unsubstantiated. Asked if Opposition members amplified the inaccurate media reporting in order to attack the Executive, this official replied:

Yes and some of those stories appeared to become accepted as fact in spite of the fact that you constantly issued rebuttals. There was obviously a big story and there was something for Parliament to get in and about. It was a perfectly legitimate subject for a parliamentary inquiry and a perfectly legitimate subject for the media to make a fuss about. It was depressing the extent to which it was 'grandstanding' as opposed to trying to get into what really went wrong because if what really went wrong wasn't something which they could hang Sam Galbraith out to dry for then they didn't really want to know. That was the impression given by certain individuals and in fact in certain bits of the media as well. They wanted it to be one prominent person's fault. They were much more interested in versions of the story that made that happen. (interview, SE Official E)

However, it appears as though the Scottish Executive ministers did not 'use' the Parliament to counter-frame these attacks:

They played it pretty straight. Sam Galbraith made his statement to the Parliament at the first opportunity. His statement was a very straight factual one about what had happened and it was a really charged moment. That was him standing up and saying his piece and he did it. He did it to the Parliament, he didn't go to the media first. There was then the usual amount of media fuss around it. He had a certain respect for the Parliament. Certainly, a minister of that generation would. That is how they behave. Other things that were worked through the [Education] Committee inquiry were also played very straight. I don't know to what extent there may have been other Labour party political spin doctoring going on. I was not aware of it and if there was any of it, it can't have been very successful as the crisis didn't play out very well! (interview, SE Official E)

Framing: Summary

The contributions of 33 parliamentarians and officials support an argument that UK representative assemblies can frame public perceptions during crises. Westminster, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly were all involved in executive and backbench attempts to frame issues for public consumption in these cases. This function, therefore, reveals another inter-institutional theme relating to the involvement of parliaments in periods

of crisis. Because they can affect opinions, they can, as was proposed in chapters one and three, influence the legitimacy of specific authorities during crises. This allows an argument to be presented that representative assemblies are relevant to the politics of crisis management. However, the conclusion that the assemblies are always important in this regard does not necessarily follow on from that finding. Evidence from all three countries suggests that the representative assemblies are often incapable of affecting public perceptions. When we compare the examples of successful and unsuccessful framing, themes emerge in support of two claims about the conditions under which parliaments can affect perceptions during crises. First, elites appear to believe that parliaments are far more capable of influencing *specific* publics during crises. There is less confidence in the capability of parliaments to influence the *general* public. Evidence for this conclusion is widespread. With a general election close and apocalyptic scenes of livestock slaughter and disposal being broadcast, there was a need to communicate to the general public en masse during the FMD crisis. This was one reason why Parliament was by-passed by the executive in favour of the 'governmental media machine'. Mark Todd's wry comment that communicating through Westminster is, 'one way of making sure your criticisms are not heard terribly well across the country' and Lembit Opik's belief that the general public remained 'completely confused' and 'didn't understand' the big FMD issues, despite the efforts of MPs both indicate that the Government was sensible to communicate by other means. In Wales, WAG officials involved in the FMD and fuel crises both questioned the effectiveness of the Assembly to act as a communication channel between executive and general public. Further evidence came from Paul Holmes and two Westminster officials who all explained that the Commons Education Committee's counter-framing messages were most keenly heard amongst educational interest groups, affected families, and within the Westminster village. Their perspectives were corroborated via the QCA official who argued that the Committee's findings could not have influenced public opinion because the

issues were 'very complex' and because unaffected members of the public do not 'have enough hours in the day to really dig down and understand things to that level of detail'. Finally, in Scotland two MSPs - Marilyn Livingstone and Brian Monteith - indicated that the Scottish Parliament was more capable of affecting the perceptions of individual constituents than the perceptions of the nation as a whole.

Second, the success of parliamentary framing efforts largely depends upon the interaction between parliamentarians and journalists. This finding is hardly surprising. The discussion in chapter one of symbolic crisis communication noted that parliaments had already been described in crisis literature as potentially relevant institutions, precisely because they can provide 'dramatic representations' of events which lend themselves to mass media articulation (tHart 1993: 41; Boin *et al.* 2005:71-72). The findings above are relevant to that literature because they substantiate the intuition of these authors with empirical evidence and, just as importantly, shed new light on the parliamentary-media relationship through specific examples. Parliamentarians can become important to framing processes if they can develop 'coalitions of self interest' with journalists who have similar goals. Journalists will engage with parliamentarians if they feel that they can gain information that will satisfy editors and audiences while parliamentarians, particularly though not always Opposition members, will seek to use the media to communicate during crises. On occasion, these coalitions of self interest can mean the amplification of parliamentary voices and an increase in their importance in relation to framing. Mutually beneficial, *quid pro quo*, relationships developed between parliamentary members and reporters during these crises, which did have an impact on public perceptions. Evidence for this claim is threaded throughout the findings above. In Wales, the ARDC chair, Glyn Davies, briefed the media before and after 'grandstanding' controversial statements in plenary. In return, certain reporters would contact the chairman first for comment on controversial stories that they had unearthed. Through this relationship

the Chairman articulated his contempt for the UK Government's 'framed' communications and his support for the Welsh disease control strategy. Owen Paterson's argument that Westminster's Agriculture Select Committee was an effective counter-framing mechanism stems from the MP's belief that he was 'pretty good' at using the press to publicise issues and at making sure that people were watching the televised committee sessions. Indeed, Mr. Paterson continually stressed throughout his interview that he had a mutually beneficial relationship with several journalists, which he used to gather information and publicise issues during the crisis. Further evidence was provided in Scotland by the SEERAD official who stated that important messages could be picked up and amplified by the media if repeated continually within the Scottish Parliament. Elaine Murray's frustration at the Scottish media also sheds light on this relationship. Backbench attempts to use the media to get serious consideration of factual information and promote 'sensible' debate are prone to failure because they offer journalists very little in terms of sensationalism. Backbenchers wishing to counter-frame without 'grandstanding' have less chance of being amplified by the media than more controversial Opposition claims, which are deemed more 'newsworthy'. This claim was supported by Paul Holmes and Gwyneth Dunwoody who both stated that select committee work can only frame public perceptions if the press consider the topic of inquiry 'sexy' and also by Cathie Peattie who stressed how the press tended to cover committee activities which were exciting enough to 'sell'. The exam crises provided the clearest possible evidence of the importance of this self-perpetuating relationship. Interviewees repeatedly returned to this interaction as an influence over the way in which the Scottish and English problems 'blew up' into a crisis, the way in which blame was allocated and the entrenchment of a crisis of confidence in each education system. In those cases, the parliament-media relationship was a translating dynamic which escalated the political scale of each crisis. The testimonies of UK Official E and Scottish Executive Official E are particularly noteworthy in this regard because of their similarity. In the English exam crisis,

parliamentarians 'played to the gallery' while the press 'picked things up and made more of it than was intended'. This process, whereby, 'Parliament influences and is influenced by the way the media behaves' was believed to have escalated the crisis of confidence in the assessment system. In Scotland, a perception existed amongst officials within the Scottish Executive that the exam crisis escalated through a self-reinforcing dynamic which developed between Opposition parliamentarians and the media. This symbiotic relationship was such that the SEED official could not tell to what extent 'Parliament was responding to the media or the media was responding to Parliament' yet it proved powerful enough to turn unsubstantiated rumours into accepted 'facts', which then became part of the popular narrative of that crisis.

6.2 'Issue Escape', Policy Influence and the Exit Function

Theoretical Propositions

In chapters one and three it was proposed that the nature of many contemporary crises could force control of decision making to 'escape' from the grip of an executive and 'spill' into a larger arena, which is more public and political (tHart 1993; Pakenham 1990; Judge 1993). If this does occur, parliamentary research suggests that the representative assembly may become more influential in the process of policy development (Pakenham 1990; Judge 1993).

In 1970, Pakenham described how the Brazilian Congress was turned to when normal decision making mechanisms proved incapable of providing a way out of severe political crises. On these occasions, the Congress was permitted to exercise significant constitutional authority, which under normal circumstances, was restrained by political and military elites. Pakenham called this the 'exit' function because the parliament was turned to when the

political system had reached an impasse, which normal decision making processes could not resolve (Packenham 1990: 91). In the *Parliamentary State*, Judge (1993: 126-130) highlighted a process whereby issues 'escaped' from insulated 'policy communities' into larger, more political, networks. When issues 'spilled' through the boundaries of these communities into the public domain, the House of Commons became a venue for groups looking to influence the 'climate' of the policy debate; ensure that their specific policy preferences were initiated; and, affect the future agenda of policy communities. Importantly, all the examples of 'issue escape' discussed by Judge were prompted by executive policy choices which attracted political conflict, instability and threats to values. These triggering factors, it was argued in chapter three, are similar to the defining characteristics of contemporary crises. Indeed, in one of Judge's examples, a crisis opened up the policy making community to a larger arena of actors, one of which was Parliament.

The following section examines whether or not issues 'escaped' into the wider political and parliamentary arenas during the crises under study. On these occasions the representative assembly is likely to become invigorated as parliamentarians realise that their assembly's influence has grown. This could occur in the way that Packenham described, via a growth in direct legislature influence over decision making or in the way that Judge described, as a focal point for interest group activities. Ultimately, if a process of issue escape has taken place, and the parliamentary arena has temporarily grown in importance, the parliament in question should be associated with some definitive aspects of policy development by representatives *and* government officials.

Research Findings

Evidence from 21 interviewees, alongside official documents pertaining to some of the crises; indicate that issues did escape from the full control of the UK, Welsh and Scottish

executives. In these examples, the uncertainty of each crisis created a context in which the executives either lost their 'grip' on policymaking or were forced to engage with a new range of organisations when considering policy choices. On a limited number of occasions, the representative assemblies became more important to the development of crisis response policies. Positive examples of parliamentary influence over crisis management policy in England and Wales related exclusively to the FMD crisis. In Scotland, the epidemic also threw up evidence of small-scale parliamentary influence over policy. However, the Scottish exam crisis reveals a rare example of parliamentary backbenchers influencing reform legislation in the form of the Scottish Qualifications Act (2002). Conversely, during the fuel crisis the UK Executive maintained a tight control over decision making and the representative assemblies were excluded from the decision making process.

Foot and Mouth

On 27 February 2001 a collective ministerial decision was taken to amend the Foot and Mouth Disease Order (1983) so that local authorities could restrict access to all rural footpaths within their boundaries. Prior to this amendment, only those footpaths within Infected Areas were automatically out of public bounds. The change in policy was accompanied by statements from the Prime Minister, the Minister for Agriculture and the President of the NFU who emphasised that the risk of FMD spreading could be reduced if people stayed away from agricultural areas (HC 888 2002: 68). Post-epidemic, a number of organisations criticised the decision, stating that the closure of Rights of Way exacerbated the economic losses felt within the tourism industry that year. The National Trust, for example, described giving local authorities the power to impose blanket pathway closures as the most costly decision of the entire outbreak (HC 888 2002: 64). The decision was also criticised as reflecting a lack of veterinary and scientific advice as the closure of so many footpaths outside of infected regions did little to reduce the spread of FMD (HC 888 2002:

65). The Anderson Inquiry Report states that the 'audit trail' for this decision is unclear but makes reference to a wider mood in support of blanket closures, which was reflected in the arguments of Westminster MPs from all parties in a debate on the 26 February 2001 (HC 888 2002: 69). In evidence to the inquiry, Neil Thornton - described in the Anderson Report evidence as one of three 'primary policy advisers to ministers' - suggested that the general 'mood' from the House of Commons, as indicated in the debate on the 26 February, was one factor that influenced the decision (HC 888 2002, Annex, 26 April, para.39).

The footpath decision is important for two reasons. First, because the mood of a larger public was crystallised via Parliament, which subsequently influenced a major crisis management decision. Second, because the decision appears to have been a mistake. It has been criticised as a populist 'knee-jerk' reaction to public pressure by interviewees for this thesis (interviews, David Curry, Mark Todd); by contributors to the Anderson Inquiry, (HC 888 2002, Annex, 19 April: para.4); and, by Dr Anderson himself (HC 888 2002: 65).

All the MPs and officials interviewed in relation to the epidemic were asked if Parliament influenced the decision to close footpaths or any other policy decisions during the epidemic. All the MPs agreed that all the parties had communicated support for the closures of footpaths in the Commons and that this was likely to have influenced the Minister (interviews, Lembit Opik, David Curry, Mark Todd, David Borrow, Owen Paterson). In this instance, Parliament became the focal point for farming interests seeking to 'close the countryside'. Farming demands at this early point in the crisis received cross-party support because, stakeholders like the NFU were a recognised and established interest group, no alternative argument was being made from other areas, and there was a perception that farmers were the only victims:

For most MPs, the pressure was mainly coming from their farming communities because they actually had a proper organisation in place and the farmers just wanted the countryside totally shut down. Now in retrospect, from the tourism point of view, the countryside didn't need to be shut down at all but the huge demand of farmers was to shut the place down and MPs, because perhaps they saw farmers as the victims more than the other industries, were the ones who tended to sustain that view. (interview, David Curry)

I think there was an acceptance in Parliament that action was required and I think that that [the attitude to footpaths] reflected our lack of knowledge about how the disease was carried. There was a large amount of rumour around that period of uncertainty. People were saying let's do something about the footpaths, they wanted action. With hindsight it may not have been the best decision. (interview, Mark Todd)

None of the DEFRA officials had sufficient knowledge to confirm the details about the thinking behind the footpath decision. Nevertheless, this is an example of decision making 'spillage'. An issue first escaped the control of MAFF, moved into a larger public arena and Parliament became a focal point for interest group concerns. Most importantly, however, is that the crystallisation of those concerns via Parliament influenced the policy 'climate' or 'mood' in a way that encouraged footpath closures.

There is no proof that Parliament affected other aspects of the acute crisis response, and footpath decision aside, both MPs and officials were sceptical about the ability of Westminster to participate directly in crisis policymaking. No other examples of growth in parliamentary influence were presented but some counterfactual examples were shared. For example, Mark Todd recognised that:

The vaccination issue was one debated very thoroughly and bounced around and arguably you could say that Parliament was not very influential there because public opinion, once the animal welfare dimension started to emerge, would probably have favoured an attempt to introduce vaccination ... if that decision had been taken through a proper parliamentary process I would think you would have got more of a shift in that policy. (interview, Mark Todd)

A regional DEFRA official also explained that the mood from Parliament did not filter down

to the operational level. Officials were simply far too busy. The quote below, however, indicates that policymaking deliberations did open up to a larger network of actors at a local level and that MPs were part of that network:

We were not very aware of what was going on in the Parliament except on a peripheral basis when we had to provide some briefings. I think the local mood as reflected through the farmers, the local authorities, and the local MPs was far more important and indeed through some of the stake-holding groups and I suspect that some stakeholders - national and regional groups - may have had more impact than Parliament in that respect because we were dealing with people who actually knew what they were talking about. (interview, UK Official H)

The Chairman of the Agriculture Committee during the crisis, David Curry, provided a reason for the minimal influence of Parliament at other times during the crisis. Mr. Curry supported the issue escape theory, claiming that Westminster can influence policy development when the issue is ethically, religiously or ideologically significant. On such occasions:

Parliament really is the fulcrum of the debate because people are not whipped. People don't bring their own political attitudes to the issue at all; they bring their own personal ethical or religious viewpoints. In these situations I think that Parliament does set the tone and what Parliament decides does become a framework within which the wider debate takes place ... similarly if there is dissent on the government side, as there is with education at the moment, then Parliament comes alive in terms of being the fulcrum of the debate. (interview, David Curry)

However, during the FMD epidemic there was a general consensus over the objectives of policy (stopping the spread of FMD). Conflicts only arose about weaknesses in policy implementation. According to Mr. Curry, this meant that parliamentary influence over executive deliberations was limited:

Foot and Mouth became a political issue but with a small p not a big p ... With Foot and Mouth disease there was not an element of party political argument

about it. I don't think Labour MPs views were very distinguishable from our views in terms of their opinions of the outcomes. There was not that sense of big ethical issues to be decided upon. (interview, David Curry)

Evidence from two WAG officials and one AM suggests that during the epidemic the Welsh Assembly became slightly more influential in a policy sense (interviews, Glyn Davies, WAG Officials B, C). For example, the Chairman of the ARDC argued that:

The Minister was listening. He was a new minister. I wouldn't say he was hugely knowledgeable about that disease. He was a barrister, he was looking to devolution, he wanted to work, and he was engaging very much with us and he was powerful enough to make certain that his civil servants were listening to what he was saying. (interview, Glyn Davies)

More importantly, the key decision makers within the WAG also felt that the Assembly, to an extent, had affected their policy deliberations. For example, asked whether or not decision making had 'spilled' into a larger arena during the Foot and Mouth crisis, one high ranking WAG official replied:

I think certainly more influences creep into it. If your hypothesis is that decision making becomes more disparate then I would say that wasn't my experience in this case. We created a team of people, working to a Minister, and a pretty small team actually, who were taking all the decisions throughout. As I say, *the spheres of influence* got bigger and indeed we dealt with some spheres of influence that we hadn't even thought about, dreamt about, when the crisis started. Like DEFRA, we hadn't thought about environmental effects in the way we perhaps ought to have, we hadn't thought about the effects on the rural economy in the way that perhaps we ought to have, and eventually we put those things right but it wasn't immediate. So those spheres of influence were having no effect at the outset and it was only as the crisis deepened that you could see the connections all over the place and as those connections became obvious then more and more people became germane to the debate. (interview, WAG Official C, emphasis added)

Asked whether or not the Assembly could be considered as a *sphere of influence*, the same official confirmed:

Yes, absolutely. Here we monitored every single committee, every single debate, we watched most of them on TV or had them monitored by someone and I would have a discussion with the Minister subsequent to every committee meeting, every debate as to what had come out of it and whether there was anything for us to do. (interview, WAG Official C)

The re-opening of footpaths and the relaxation of movement restrictions towards the end of the crisis were given as examples of the WAG recognising the Welsh Assembly during the crisis because, according to this official, ‘local politicians were being lobbied hard by their constituents and it was they that were then saying; haven’t you over reacted? Isn’t it about time you re-opened these ways that are not making any difference?’ (interview, WAG Official C). This, therefore, is another example of a decision making process opening up and a representative assembly becoming a focal point for lobbying. The difference between this example and the UK example, however, relates to the nature and scale of the Assembly’s impact over decision making. Unlike the House of Commons, the Assembly did not significantly influence the wider policy climate or affect one single large-scale disease control decision. Instead it managed to affect more specific, smaller scale decisions across a longer timeframe.

The responses of the Scottish Executive and the WAG to Foot and Mouth appear to be similar in terms of the willingness of crisis managers to listen to each parliament. The testimonies of those involved in Scotland also suggest that the decision making process opened up and that the Scottish Parliament became one sphere of influence in SEERAD policy deliberations. For example, John Scott, a Conservative MSP with a farming background, was asked whether it was possible that the Parliament influenced SEERAD decisions during the crisis:

Yes. ... Scotland’s a very small place in terms of these sorts of crisis and agriculture is a very small village of movers and shakers, probably two, three four hundred people max who are the key decision makers and obviously

Parliament would be very much part of that process. There are short communication lines and you got a consensual view emerging very quickly then about what needed to be done. It's not an oil tanker to be turned around like the way it is possibly in England but of course the scale of the problems there was much greater but we have immediate lines of communications here and that's one of the great virtues of the Parliament, that we can communicate as a regional Parliament and the accessibility of the Executive to a member of this Parliament is much better. (interview John Scott)

Alex Fergusson and Elaine Murray both claimed that MSPs influenced small-scale disease control decisions. According to Mr. Fergusson, the consensual political climate surrounding the SEERAD response meant that the Scottish Executive found it easier to maintain control of decision making:

I think it's probably right to say we affected some decisions but at the same time the Scottish Parliament did not try to alter the big decisions which were taken, it was very largely supportive of the Executive's actions. I think there were a number of factors that led to that agreement, not least that we had a bit of time when it was all happening down south to think "what do we do when this comes up here" ... I'm sure the minister and his officials had already started to work things out by that time. Had it started in Scotland it might have been a different story altogether. (interview, Alex Fergusson)

Elaine Murray corroborated Mr. Fergusson's view and provided an example of the small-scale nature of the policy decisions that MSPs affected:

Obviously ministers would be aware of the feelings of people in the Chamber ... For example, there was an issue about hefted sheep, they were treated different in Cumbria than they were in Scotland. Some of the hefted sheep were spared in Cumbria but they were not to be spared here and the point had to be made that you couldn't just replace those sheep with others from a different area because sheep that roam have to learn about the area from previous generations or they wouldn't survive. In the end they were spared and I remember raising various questions and raising it in debates in Parliament. It led to a relaxation of culling in terms of hefted sheep, particularly because there was not a significant risk of transmission. (interview, Elaine Murray)

Both interviewed SEERAD officials agreed that the number of spheres of influence grew during the crisis and that the Scottish Parliament was one such sphere. For example, one

senior policy official outlined a decision making process which was very similar to the one described by the WAG officials from the Agriculture Department:

What happened with Foot and Mouth was that it was clear that we had to involve a much larger group of stakeholders because you had consequential effects. The effects on access to the countryside, the effects on rural businesses, disposal, led to other bodies being included. We had a very small tight group of people here, which was known as the Disease Strategy Group, who worked very closely with the Minister and the Parliament. We then had a much wider stakeholder group. Now, the first thing the Minister did was make a statement to Parliament to tell them that we have a crisis and say "this is how I'm going to handle it". The Environment and Rural Development Committee would take a close interest so they would be calling for information from time to time, there might be a debate in the Parliament if that's what the Parliament wanted. Sometimes they were quite happy just to get a statement from the Minister and maybe question him for ten or fifteen minutes. It's really up to the Parliament about how much they want to be involved. Parliament was more concerned about "where is this leading us?" and "is this the best way to get there?" Those kind of issues. They were an influence on the strategy group. (interview, SE Official B)

Finally two Scottish Executive officials from the Contingencies Division stated that the management of spheres of influence during a crisis was a priority for an effective response. It was claimed that the Parliament could not be considered to be a great influence over operational considerations during an acute emergency but that the parliamentary system could communicate a 'mood', which would be a consideration for ministers and policy officials concerned with the strategic aspects of a crisis response (interviews, SE Officials, C, D). For example, one official explained that that the Contingencies Division had established 'machinery' for the inclusion of 'external views from outside the circle' should they be required to inform the decision making process during any crisis (interview, SE Official C). Asked if the Scottish Parliament would be considered as one such external view, this official replied:

Absolutely yeah and there's different layers and levels as well. Ministers would be in touch with Whitehall opposite numbers, there would be the special advisor network as well. The special advisors to our ministers would be in touch with

Whitehall to give a UK dimension to any emergency. Ministers or special advisors would contact their own party MSPs, the Lib-Dem or Labour MSPs, and their researchers and so on and also we would probably be briefing, formally through a statement or informally, the SNP and the Opposition parties. Through all of that they would be picking up 'mood music' and specific issues which would be fed into us in one way or another. The model that we have created and that is beginning to work, that we have tested in exercises, is designed to have an ability to analyse all the information and all the different views that come in from wherever and it's about making sure that it all boils down into advice to the minister and comes feeding back out to the system. It's really about pulling together all the relevant information and making sure were not omitting any bits, that we're synthesising the relevant views and feeding into an open and responsive model. Parliament is clearly part of that model. (interview, SE Official C)

The Fuel Crisis

The fuel crisis case study provided no evidence that Parliament influenced the development of policy in any significant way. Interviewees tended to focus on the decline of parliamentary influence in this area. Indeed, two interviewees went on to stress that Parliament should not be allowed to influence contingent decisions in a crisis because of the danger of 'knee-jerk' reactions to public opinion (interviews, Brian Donohoe, Michael Connarty): Andrew Miller was another MP with a fuel blockade in his constituency. Mr. Miller argued along the same lines as David Curry noted earlier, by emphasising that when an issue becomes 'ethical' Parliament has a greater chance of influencing policy debate because, 'when you can translate a policy into something that actually affects a real group of human beings, when you can identify that there are vulnerable people, debates count' (interview, Andrew Miller). The argument presented by Mr. Miller was that the fuel protests were initially defined as an economic rather than an environmental issue. Only later, after government ministers started making the case for environmental taxation did the issue move into 'ethical' grounds. To some extent, this reduced the likelihood of 'issue escape' because the debate over policy choices was less ideological (interview, Andrew Miller).

The Welsh evidence from the fuel protests is not convincing. Only one interviewee, John

Griffiths AM, gave any indication that issues escaped into a wider parliamentary arena. However, even this contribution was far from emphatic as Mr.Griffiths focused more on the invigorated nature of parliamentary duties rather than growth in policy influence:

If there is a crisis, then different levels and different parts of the political process will inevitably be drawn into it because such is the heat of the debate and the importance of the issues that that is inevitable. ... I'm sure it [the Assembly] did have an impact because that's the nature of politics, governments respond in part to the expression of the will of parliament. (interview, John Griffiths)

A number of factors suggest, however, that decision making did not 'spill' out from the WAG and that the Assembly was not a significant influence over policy. First, the Welsh Assembly Government's response to the crisis was largely operational and low key. It was designed to assess fuel shortages, monitor the situation and operationalise the movement of emergency fuel supplies (interview, WAG Official A). The bigger policy decisions were being made by the UK Government. There is little scope in this kind of response for the inclusion of parliamentarians. Second, the reserved nature of fuel duty meant that the executive parties were unwilling to debate the issue in the Assembly (*Welsh Assembly Record*, 12 September 2000). This meant that there was little opportunity, outside of the limited time given to ministerial statements, for Assembly Members to influence WAG decisions in any way. One official who was involved in the fuel protest response confirmed that the Assembly was not considered to be important amongst officials involved in the operational response (interview, WAG Official A); and no other interviewee was willing to identify an important policy role for the Assembly.

There is no evidence of the Scottish Parliament influencing policy development during this crisis. All of the Scottish interviewees stated that this was because the issue was reserved, which left the Scottish Executive and Parliament little opportunity to affect decision making (interviews, Kenny MacAskill, Cathie Peattie, John Scott).

The English Exam Crisis

Only one interviewee declared that Westminster was an influence over policy during the English exam crisis. According to Oliver Heald MP:

The Chamber allows you a bit of personal contact with the minister that they can't ignore and it embarrasses them hugely which is a very useful thing. It also cranks up the pressure on the official. If you're an official and your minister goes into the Chamber and listens to a whole load of MPs saying that a disaster has occurred and the whole thing is a complete mess, then the minister comes out afterwards and says 'what the bloody hell is going on and what are we going to do about this?' It has the effect of grabbing their attention, shaking them, and making them get onto their officials to try and do something about it. To be fair to the Government, although I'm not sure that this will never happen again, we had the Tomlinson review, there were changes made and I think the fact that we had the debate was an important element in that. (interview, Oliver Heald)

The quote above indicates that Oliver Heald, who was a junior minister under John Major, believed that the debate was one part of a wider campaign which made the DfES aware of the extent of the grading problems and generated pressure for remedial action. This claim was, to a small extent, corroborated by a senior official in the DfES who had attended the A-level debate (interview, UK Official G). This official stressed that the debate was useful as it allowed DfES staff to hear about specific cases of grading problems which were then dealt with by the Department. In this sense, the debate performed a small-scale 'errand running' role, by making officials aware of certain specific problems. However, it was also claimed that the degree of parliamentary pressure on the DfES was not significant enough to encourage substantive policy change (interviews, Paul Holmes, UK Officials E, G). The DfES official who attended the A-level debate, for example, presented a number of examples of the small ways in which parliamentary debates can shape policy 'around the edges' but maintained that Parliament could not have influenced the Minister in these ways because the Chamber was not, 'packed as they are when something really serious has happened' and 'there was not an intensity of interest in the re-grading issue within Parliament at that time' (interview, UK Official G). Hansard reinforces this official's claim. As one MP stated

during the re-grading debate, 'this is an Opposition day debate, and I can see only five Conservative Members in the Chamber - the Conservatives are playing truant' (HC Debs., 16 October 2002, vol. 390, col.355).

The Scottish Exam Crisis

The MSPs involved in this exam crisis gave the most emphatic evidence of parliamentary involvement in policy development. The Scottish Qualifications Authority Act (2002) emerged in the wake of the exam crisis. The Act contains a number of provisions, which amend the Education (Scotland) Act 1996 in relation to the management, organisation and structure of the SQA. All of the MSPs interviewed stressed that the ECSC and ELLC committees influence over the SQA Act was a significant example of decision making 'spillage', accompanied by an attendant increase in parliamentary input into policy. The Deputy Convener of the Education, Culture and Sport Committee was asked whether the Scottish Executive's control over policy choices weakened and if the Parliament's influence grew during the crisis:

Absolutely, the recommendations forming the basis of legislation came with a recognition that actually the system was never going to work properly. This needed sorted. Ministers were saying "this is all right, this is going to be fine" and no one was telling them this isn't going to be fine. Unless they sorted it there was going to be the same problem the following year and the following year. ... The change from 'hands off we know best' from the Executive to 'we have to seriously look at these things' and knowing that they were seriously looking at legislating was the most positive thing because people will say "oh the committee had an inquiry - waste of time. Have a debate and it will all go away". ... For me there is a clear connection in this case. I can see what we've done, why we had to do it and aye I may have felt bad about what happened to some people and the blood on the carpet but knowing that we were making recommendations that would change something and make a difference was important. So that change from being nuisances and getting out the other end and actually seeing legislation that changed something was the most important thing we could do. (interview, Cathy Peattie)

Brian Monteith was the Conservative Education Spokesman during the exam crisis and a

member of the Education Committee. Mr. Monteith was asked if the Committee or Parliament could be considered to be a 'sphere of influence' in terms of policy development:

The inquiry was extensive. We felt a duty to speak to everyone and I don't think that that exhaustive process would be repeated again to be honest. This was our first real attempt at something like that and I think we wanted to make sure that we got it right. The Committee was very influential. Our recommendations provoked significant policy changes. We were certainly more than just one sphere of influence. We forced the Executive to put in more money, which was the most important thing, £20 million went into sorting out the assessment system, the policies and the organisational problems. We were very forensic, very painstaking and the SQA Bill and the policy changes that were based on our report reflected that. (interview, Brian Monteith)

Scottish Executive documentation supports the contention that the Scottish Parliament Committee's influenced the SQA Act. The Education, Culture and Sport Committee and the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee recommendations are repeatedly referred to in the policy evaluation and consultation documents which preceded the Scottish Qualifications Act. For example the Scottish Executive documents, *A Review of the Options for the Future Status of the SQA*, and the SQA Act's consultation document, *Scottish Qualifications - Delivering Success*, both refer to the Committee's recommendations in order to justify a number of policy choices such as the continuation of the SQA's NDPB status and the reformation of its management structure (Scottish Executive 2002: paras.6; 8-10; 13; 19).

The committee's ability to influence post-crisis legislation in such a fashion is interesting because it is unlike the other examples of 'issue escape' noted so far. This is because the issues escaped into a wider arena in the *post-crisis* stages and because the parliament's influence grew even though it was not channelling interest group concerns. Prior to the post-crisis stage, decision making was 'handled within the [Education] Department by a very small team and was kept very tight' (interview, SE Official E). After the acute-stage issues were dealt with:

The big public debate was really about where do we go from here? Because we all realised that we had to get it right and there was an unstructured public debate going on about the future. All kinds of things were talked about: abolish the SQA, contract somebody else in, bring it all back in to the Department, abandon Higher Still and those things are probably were all the public opinion playing out and things happening in different fora became important. (interview, SE Official E)

However, this is not an example of a parliament becoming more influential as a focal point for interest group activity. Instead, the parliament's direct influence over legislation grew temporarily because of the crisis. However, it cannot really be considered to be an example of an 'exit function' of the kind defined by Pakenham because the parliamentary committees were not turned to for policy solutions. According to the SEED official, the committees influenced policy in two ways. First, like the FMD footpath example, they clarified, communicated, and added to public opinions about reform. The committees, therefore, played a pivotal part in a larger public debate. Second, the reform bill would have been tailored in light of the fact that each committee would have to scrutinise and approve it during the legislative process. It was argued, however, that these were examples of parliamentary policy influence not policy control and that they should not be taken to mean that the SQA Act was purely the result of committee activity:

Obviously you're going to build upon what has come out of the committees before. I do see the committees as having an important role but I see their role as having been crystallising a lot of the public concern, being what they are supposed to be, as in the voice of the people, and saying "hang on are we satisfied with this?" in terms of their investigation into what had happened and in their scrutiny of proposals. Now it's always for the Executive to bring the proposal and for them to say "OK, this is how you say you are going to respond are we or are we not satisfied that addresses the issues?". I think they did all of that properly. Would it have happened without parliamentary scrutiny? It would almost certainly have been different ... I haven't been involved in any piece of legislation or policy that had significant parliamentary debate around it where you didn't end up tailoring the policy in light of either what you thought was going to come at you or actually what did come at you but I doubt very much that the big direction would have been any different. ... to suggest that it was somehow Parliament that came up with the solutions, that just isn't how life

works. That they influenced it, that they had some influence over it, I have no doubt. (interview, SE Official E)

Issue Escape: Summary

The findings above are clearly relevant to the 'networks' versus 'communities' debate. They present a new empirical challenge to one-dimensional conceptions of policy making, which emphasise the exclusion of parliaments and publics (Jordan and Richardson 1982: 81; Jordan 1990: 473; Rhodes and Marsh 1992: 13; Richardson 2000: 1006). A number of testimonies question a description of crisis policymaking as being insulated within small impenetrable policy communities during crises. Certainly, key decisions in all the crises were made by a small group of executive decision makers. However, crises can force executives to seek for policy solutions and opinions amongst spheres of influence that exist outside of closed policy communities. Neil Thornton's statement that the public 'mood', as represented through Parliament, influenced the decision on footpaths; the senior WAG official's comment that, 'as the [FMD] crisis deepened you could see the connections all over the place and as those connections became obvious more and more people became germane to the debate'; and, the Scottish Executive officials who noted that SEERAD, 'had to involve a much larger group of stakeholders because of consequential effects' and that SEED listened to 'other fora' when reforming the SQA, are all examples that indicate that policy making is not always an exclusive affair during crises. Indeed, as one member of the Civil Contingencies Division explained, today's crisis management 'machinery' is designed to facilitate the rapid inclusion of a number of actors from 'outside the circle' as unforeseen contingencies arise.

More important than the 'network' versus 'community' debate, however, is the fact that when issues did escape into larger networks during the crises, the parliaments sometimes became important in the development of policy. The ability of representative assemblies to

influence policymaking when issues spill is therefore the third inter-institutional theme relating to UK parliamentary involvement during crisis episodes. These findings are of relevance to parliamentary and crisis management scholars. Examples were found of representative assemblies becoming more influential as they became the focal point of lobbying activity (as per Judge 1993) while the contribution of the Scottish Parliament to the SQA Act is reminiscent, rather than identical, to the 'exit' function described by Pakenham (1990). These examples all constitute observable empirical instances of crises inducing a 'spillage' of decision making control, which (temporarily) benefited the policy development influence of UK representative assemblies.

The fuel protests, however, indicate that executive decision making can be exclusive. The UK Executive was not sheltered from public opinion during that crisis, the issue did spill into a larger political arena, but remained exclusive. Moreover, during the FMD crisis, issues such as the vaccination debate 'escaped' into a larger public arena yet, as Mark Todd noted, Parliament's role was negligible. Care must be taken, therefore, not to generalise too excessively one way or the other when it comes to defining who is, and who is not, involved in crisis management policymaking. Neither should the importance of the representative assembly be overstated. Establishing that representative assemblies have had some degree of policy influence during certain crises does not mean that parliaments are always hugely significant to the operational dimensions of crisis management or that UK executives are likely to turn towards their representative assemblies when a crisis arrives. Westminster only influenced one significant crisis response decision during these crises and the majority of the UK interviewees did not provide evidence to support a claim that Westminster was an important policymaking institution. In fact, many interviewees delivered counterfactual testimonies characterised by negativity about the policy influence of the UK Parliament. In every interview connected to the fuel protests interviewees either failed to fully support an

'issue escape' rise in influence or provided contradictory evidence which intimated the irrelevance of the assemblies in terms of decision making. In this way, the academic perspectives noted in chapter three, which stressed that the UK Parliament is an influencer rather than an initiator of policy (Birch 1971; Mezey 1979; Norton 1984; Judge 1993) were generally reinforced, not only in relation to Westminster but also in terms of the Welsh Assembly and to a lesser degree the Scottish Parliament. Crises do not somehow transform UK parliaments into authoritative policymaking institutions. However, even modest findings about parliamentary policy influence can grow in importance when presented against conventional views of the UK legislature as an institution which is redundant to the process of policy development. Any growth in parliamentary influence, even if limited, must be considered to be significant when evaluated against the way in which contemporary legislative-executive relations in the United Kingdom are often described. Certain descriptions of Parliament present a caricatured image of parliaments as nothing more than 'rubber stamps'. Instances where a parliament can be shown to have influenced internal executive policy deliberations - however small or temporary - must be treated as significant because they present a challenge to these kinds of description. When government officials define representative assemblies as a sphere of influence over contemporary policymaking, academics must concede that not all policy processes in the twenty-first century are 'post-parliamentary'.

In some of these crises decision making influence did spill into the representative assemblies but in others the executives maintained greater control of the crisis response. The key question is therefore; what factors trigger the exit function and increase the policy influence of a parliament during a crisis? An argument can be put forward that the *degree of uncertainty* surrounding policy choices is one significant variable. Further analysis of a number of the 'spillages' that occurred in the cases above can justify this claim.

1) The FMD footpath decision revealed a real sense of uncertainty within the UK Government and Parliament during the initial outbreaks. The Anderson Inquiry provides an insight into the climate of uncertainty within which decision makers were operating during the early days of the crisis:

The epidemic of 2001 presented unprecedented challenges which no-one in any country had anticipated. ... Although Ministers and their veterinary experts and officials recognised from the outset that they were in a serious situation, no one in command understood in sufficient detail what was happening on the ground during these early days. ... A sense of panic appeared, communications became erratic and orderly processes started to break down. Decision making became haphazard and messy. (HC 888 2002: 6)

The overwhelming scale and unprecedented spread of the outbreaks is likely to have been one factor that opened up the policymaking process because it instilled crisis leaders with a sense of uncertainty about the correct course of action. This uncertain context meant that the ministers were willing to listen to solutions offered by an authoritatively loud voice. At this point in the crisis, farming groups managed to use parliamentarians to amplify their demands for footpath closures. These demands were channelled loudly through Parliament because, as Mark Todd explained, MPs at that point were also operating in a climate of uncertainty.

2) During the Welsh FMD response the spheres of influence over WAG decision making grew as the timeframe of the crisis elongated. This distinguishes the Welsh and English FMD experiences. Instead of a brief exertion of parliamentary influence at the impact stage, which affected one crisis management decision, the Welsh example shows that decision making influence can 'spill' gradually over a longer period of time and affect a range of decisions in a more subtle manner. As the senior official from the Agriculture Department noted, the spheres of influence - one of which was the Assembly - evolved as the officials were confronted with a series of issues that they, 'hadn't even thought about, dreamt about,

when the crisis started'. Although this case diverges from the Westminster experience, it still points to uncertainty as a variable. During the FMD crisis in Wales the materialisation of new uncertainties over a long period encouraged a gradual kind of decision making spillage.

3) The Scottish Parliament was also defined as one sphere of influence which affected the Scottish FMD response but the policy examples provided by the interviewees were more limited than the examples given in Wales and England. However, the contributions of Alex Fergusson, John Scott, the SEERAD policy official, and the evidence provided in relation to symbolic outputs (section 6.1), all indicate that the degree of uncertainty surrounding the Scottish response was not as great as it was in England and Wales. The Scottish Executive had time to monitor and prepare for the epidemic. When it did arrive the outbreaks were contained in one geographical location, which meant that the crisis was more manageable. Because of these factors, Scottish crisis leaders did not have to 'grasp' at policy solutions in the way their English counterparts did in the early stages of the crisis, and the emergence of new uncertainties in England and Wales first gave SEERAD enough time to improve their crisis response. The corresponding degree of decision making spillage and Scottish Parliament influence over policy were, therefore, less pronounced.

4) Levels of uncertainty may also partly explain the limited policy influence of the UK Parliament in the exam crisis and the fuel protests - as Westminster was in recess during the initial impact and acute stages of those crises. At the likely point of greatest uncertainty - the acute impact stage - the authoritative voice that was heard at the start of the FMD epidemic remained silent in these cases. Moreover, the English exam crisis and the fuel protests were not as overwhelming as the FMD epidemic. This would suggest that policymakers were not under the same pressure to 'grasp' at policy solutions.

5) The Scottish exam crisis was similar to the one which affected England two years later in the sense that both were fairly limited policy failures, which affected a minority of students. However, where they do diverge is in terms of the degree of uncertainty that they generated. Two issues are important. First, for a considerable period of time, the Scottish Executive, could not determine the nature and extent of the problem, which heightened the uncertain context:

The meltdown that happened was very quick and created a very confusing situation for Ministers and for the Department ... If we had known and been precise and been able to quantify where the problems were, I don't think it would have been a crisis but because we were sitting there with public scrutiny and anxious candidates unable to tell them precisely the extent of the problem, I think it was a crisis ... Everything with which I got any certainty about in at least the first fortnight then fell apart. It started with "all the certificates have definitely been issued", that fell, then we had a sequence of "there are definitely only problems in this set of things", turned out that wasn't true and every number I got, every piece of information that stated this is the depth of it, this is the bottom of it kept falling for about a fortnight before we actually understood how deep a hole we were in. (interview, SE Official E)

The age of the devolution settlement is also important. The first Scottish parliamentary session began in May 1999 and the Scottish exam crisis impacted in the summer of 2000, making it the first real crisis to occur in the newly devolved political system. This meant that there was uncertainty as to how the crisis should be handled by the Scottish Executive, which was now attached to an unprecedented and untried series of accountability mechanisms, and by MSPs, who were unsure how to proceed. This claim was supported by a number of interviewees who suggested that the inquiry process was unfamiliar territory and that if a similar crisis happened today, the parliamentary inquiry would not be as exhaustive as it was then (interviews, Cathie Peattie, Brian Monteith, SE Official E).

6.3 The Cathartic Function

Theoretical Propositions

Representative systems have the capacity to perform a 'safety valve' function which allows the public to purge anxieties and 'let off steam' (Smith 1938: 187; Birch 1971: 120; Jewell and Patterson 1973: 10; Pakenham 1990: 89). It was proposed in chapter three that this function could be relevant to the management of crises in three ways. First, representative processes can play a role in crisis mitigation by reducing the build up of public tensions. Second, the availability of representative 'safety valves' could improve the effectiveness of a crisis response by enhancing acquiescence to policy. Finally, parliamentary processes could allow an opportunity for the expression of emotion, which enables those affected to 'draw a line under' a crisis. Accountability mechanisms post-crisis, for example, could provide a controlled format for critical and emotional outbursts, which perform a 'sanitizing function' (Boin *et al.* 2005: 101). Crisis leaders may seek to use parliaments in this way, not because they offer catharsis *per se*, but because they can help regulate and de-limit cathartic outbursts to a manageable level (Boin *et al.* 2005: 101-102). Chapter five's findings have already indicated that parliamentarians, acting as 'lightening rods' for constituents, can provide a cathartic outlet for citizens who need to express emotions during crises. Policy acquiescence and post-crisis 'sanitization' on an individual level were cited as two effects created by the 'lightening rod' function. Other facets of a representative system, however, could also provide citizens with an opportunity to expunge their emotions during crises. The sections below are aimed towards determining if alternative outlets exist and what effect, if any, they have for the management of crises.

Research Findings

Eighteen respondents suggested alternative cathartic routes through which the representative system allowed citizens to express emotions during crises. These interviewees indicated that

these cathartic outlets were relevant to crisis avoidance, stakeholder acquiescence and post-crisis 'sanitization'. Post-crisis accountability mechanisms, elections, interest group representation and parliamentary systems as a whole were cited as being important in this regard. However, a small amount of evidence relates to each finding, which inhibits generalisation across the cases. This problem was compounded by four interviewees who all indicated that representative systems helped citizens purge emotions during crises but failed to specify the actual effects of this function (interviews, Michael Connarty, John Marek, UK Officials, F, H).

Foot and Mouth

Six interviewees presented evidence relating to non-constituency cathartic functions and the FMD crisis. Post-crisis accountability mechanisms, parliamentary debates and elections were all referred to as cathartic outlets relevant to the management of this crisis (interviews, UK Official H, Mark Todd, Glyn Davies, Mick Bates, WAG Officials, B, C). The clearest theme to emerge from these interviewees related to the Welsh Assembly. Post-epidemic, the ARDC toured the country holding public meetings. Civil servants and Assembly Members who attended these meetings, which were ostensibly about lesson learning, believed they provided a cathartic outlet that helped 'draw a line in the sand' for those affected (interviews, Glyn Davies, Mick Bates, WAG Officials, B, C). According to one AM, the inquiry process was:

All about the retribution that people require because of the crises that went on at the time. You mentioned that word cathartic, well it's the same process, everyone really had to put their head down and really think about it, hold open meetings and let everybody have their say. ... I attended meetings with hundreds of farmers to talk about the issues. At one meeting this one bloke stands up and says "it's all a load of crap. You're all responsible for this. You're trying to put farmers out of business" and almost to a man all the audience stood up and clapped and that's what it came down to in terms of our involvement. It was the feeling of isolation, and that mentality was there, a siege mentality. The Government and the Assembly therefore became the object of dissatisfaction ...

if you could stand there at the end you may have helped them but there were so many scars that government had to suffer. (interview, Mick Bates)

One DEFRA official stated that debates held in the House of Commons may have been cathartic for some local farmers but doubted whether this ‘translated’ into functional benefits for the crisis response (interview, UK Official H). Mark Todd believed that English farmers accepted the disease control strategy, ‘towards the end of the outbreak because the general election gave them the opportunity to voice their disapproval’ (interview, Mark Todd). Electoral choice in this sense was also cited as important by a member of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat. This official, who was not involved directly in the case studies, stated that the availability of an MP for constituents to speak to or ‘shout at’ during crises, and the existence of an electoral system which allowed people to express anger about the government’s handling of crises, were important to the ‘big picture’ of crisis management (interview, UK Official F).

The Fuel Protests

Four interviewees provided evidence about cathartic functions and the fuel crisis. Unsurprisingly, the representation of specific group interests was referred to repeatedly in this context. Brynle Williams, the fuel protest leader turned Assembly Member, stated that the Welsh Assembly now provides a cathartic outlet for those groups who protested in 2000, thus avoiding a repetition of the protests. Mr. Williams was asked if it helps if haulier and farming groups have someone to ‘shout at’ in the Welsh Assembly about the high cost of fuel:

Yes, it does. I get it on a regular basis. ... If the issue is that important, I believe our ministers here, all of them with their respective portfolios, can help. I can lobby the minister and say “please can you meet these people” and get them a voice and that takes a lot of the smarting out of the slap. That’s very, very important because people want to think that they are being listened to. (interview, Brynle Williams)

Asked if the existence of that process helps to avoid a repetition of the protests despite the continual rise in fuel duty, Mr. Williams commented:

Yes. I still lobby on a regular basis, I know now whose door to knock on. With parliamentary privilege I get access to people that I wouldn't normally and it's up to the public to make me work. I've had several times the road haulage people in here and the fuel lobby in here and we've met with different people and we've been able to put our message across. Whether the respective ministers want to listen to that is another thing but it brings that credibility to them as opposed to direct action, which may have started it, but it brings a degree of credibility to them. I bring them in and they sit down with the minister. If we don't have that we have anarchy. (interview, Brynle Williams)

The proposal that representative processes can mitigate crises can be tested further by returning to the explanations for the fuel crisis, as discussed in chapter four. According to Robinson (2002: 61), 'the key long-term factor which explains the politics of the fuel protests is the increasing marginalisation of both the hauliers and agricultural sector within the policy process in the UK'. The sense of exclusion felt by these groups, however, did not materialise purely because of Whitehall attitudes towards their interests. A perceived lack of representation within the House of Commons was also an issue. Brynle Williams confirmed that one cause of the protests was that hauliers and farmers felt that Whitehall *and* Westminster were no longer listening:

It was a failing in general, the price of fuel was the catalyst. We felt the government wasn't listening to industry and we tried to make them listen democratically. We'd called meetings with politicians and nobody was listening. Businesses large and small were suffering and the general public was suffering and the government seemed to think outside of the London orbital road life doesn't exist and north of the Watford gap is nothing but desert ... the actual cause of it is what I said, nobody was listening, or at least this was the impression that we had got, that nobody was listening. They weren't listening to the man on the floor, the man on the street. (interview, Brynle Williams)

Indeed, during the crisis the protest leader told the BBC that they had been lobbying MPs for more than three years, about the cost of living in the countryside (BBC 8 September 2000).

Evidence from other interviews also indicates that the feeling of exclusion felt by the protestors was accentuated by the attitude of many Labour MPs. According to one member of the Scottish Parliament who had close contact with the protestors, negative perceptions within the government and among the Labour benches about the nature of the protestors escalated the protests. It was argued that before and during the protests Labour politicians viewed the protestors as self interested businessmen complaining about drops in profits (interview, Kenny MacAskill). This argument was reinforced during the interviews with the Labour MPs who all made depreciatory remarks about the protestors. For example, the Chair of the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Select Committee stated:

I made some public broadcasts almost immediately after it started and called these people poujadist and said they've had a number of different concessions in different ways, which they had, and that I think that this was both short sighted and selfish, which I did. Now the government took nearly four days before it climbed on that particular bandwagon and started to say similar sorts of things. So my criticism of the government was not being too tough on these people it was that they were not being tough enough. (interview, Gwyneth Dunwoody)

A second member of the Committee at the time of the protests also argued:

That crisis was to a great extent engineered by those that were unaffected by the issues. The likes of farmers, why they got involved I'll never know, because farmers were not at all affected because they don't pay high fuel tax. They fuelled the protests, if you pardon the pun, but they had nothing at all to lose from the price of fuel other than what the basic cost of the commodity costs to buy directly from the oil industry ... I had one farmer make some comment to me and I just turned on him and said "well you'll be well compensated as you always are" and they run for cover when you say that because farmers are by far and away the biggest subsidy junkies in this country. (interview, Brian Donohoe)

Hansard's record of the post-crisis debates shows that these opinions are not unique within the Labour party. The majority of Labour MPs who participated in those debates continually expressed pejorative opinions about the protestors (see for example, Bridget Prentice and Dennis Skinner's contributions, HC Debs., 2 November 2000, vol.355, col. 846-850).

The connection being made here between the cause of the protests and Westminster is worth reiterating. The protestors' anger was directed towards the escalating price of fuel but it was enhanced because they felt excluded from a policy making process that had become increasingly concerned with the pursuit of environmental objectives. This feeling of exclusion was enhanced by a lack of representation within the UK Parliament, and the unsympathetic attitude of Labour MPs. In other words, the representative 'safety valve' was closed, which intensified the anger of those who went on to protest in 2000. Other interviewees added to this argument by stating that the representation of legitimate interest groups through the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly reduced the length and severity of the protests in the devolved countries (interviews, John Griffiths, Kenny MacAskill). Kenny MacAskill, the MSP who made representations on behalf of the Road Haulage Association (RHA) in the Scottish Parliament, for example, stated:

If you don't give people a legitimate outlet for their voices, whether it's rioting by black people, whether it's civil rights protestors in the USA or Northern Ireland, people will go extra-parliamentary, so it's important that you keep the political process open and allow representation ... It was important for them [the RHA] to say there is movement, if they had to go back to their members and say the Executive have given us the two fingers and the Opposition have said "there is nothing we can do"... It's all about movement, you have to keep everyone on board, otherwise the RHA implode, mavericks take action and that would fundamentally damage democracy because you wouldn't see any point in going to Parliament, you would just go and do what you thought was good for you. You have to have rules of engagement in a democracy. The rules of the game are important, people have to also have some outcome and they have to have some opportunity to be heard, not necessarily to change people's views, but just given the opportunity to be heard. (interview, Kenny MacAskill)

John Griffith (AM), asked if any representative processes provided a safety valve that reduced anger during the fuel protests, argued that that if the Assembly wasn't there to act as a well established and recognised avenue for protestors 'the situation would have been much worse and we'd probably have seen a lot more illegal action and direct action' (interview, John

Griffiths).

Finally, six parliamentarians from across the UK stated that representative systems as a whole can provide forms of catharsis (interviews, Gwyneth Dunwoody, Paul Holmes, Oliver Heald, Elaine Murray, John Scott, John Marek). These contributions, however, relate more to a general capacity rather than specific case study examples. With one exception (John Marek), these respondents all connected cathartic forms of representation to crisis mitigation or policy acquiescence. The evidence in this area can be conflated because all these interviewees stated that parliamentary systems provide a cathartic channel for dissatisfactions and then indicated that this could either improve mitigation or policy compliance. Oliver Heald, for example, argued that without the UK Parliament 'safety valve', 'crisis managers would find it a lot more difficult to do things because people would feel they were illegitimate and that they were being forced to do something in an autocratic way' (interview, Oliver Heald). Paul Holmes explained that the UK parliamentary system, 'is a good safety valve and a good safeguard ... if people felt that, as you would in a dictatorship, that something was being imposed on you and there was nothing you could do about it then that would lead to more extreme reactions by people against the system but if people feel that there are legitimate routes through which they can make complaints it makes them feel happy even if in the end nothing changes' (interview, Paul Holmes). Gwyneth Dunwoody also argued that parliamentary catharsis was relevant to crisis avoidance and policy acceptance:

What you need really is a forum where people can debate and argue and fight ... the history of this country suggests that when you're fighting in the institutions verbally you're not bashing each other over the head with dirks, on the whole it's better ... If people react against something that the government does negatively, if the government then makes the alternative argument and their arguments are also being made at the same time here [Parliament] then people are more prepared to listen. Doesn't mean that they are going to change their minds necessarily, but if people feel that a solution is being imposed without their views having been

expressed then they don't accept it and you get a much greater degree of resistance or even quite a violent response. On the whole the history in Britain has always been that people don't do that because they feel that they do have some kind of representation. If they didn't feel that then it would be a different situation. (interview, Gwyneth Dunwoody)

John Scott vividly summarised the importance of the tension release function performed by the Scottish parliamentary system:

I have been in Sicily for the past week and I drove around there and I've never experienced anything quite like it in my life. Everybody drives with their hands on the horn. In traffic jams on long streets the people wait and wait and then one person blows their horn and then everybody blows their horn and it's a cacophony of noise and then everybody has got it out of their system and they will sit and wait and after a period of time everybody does it again. What I'm saying is that feelings are vented and I doubt if there is any real road rage there because before it gets to rage people have let it out of their system. They haven't bottled it all up and perhaps similarly the parliamentary system, through things like debates and parliamentary petitions, is also a way of people venting their views and that's as it should be and one would hope that helps during a crisis and then informs the discussion thereafter. (interview, John Scott)

Cathartic Functions: Summary

The logic behind the proposal of the cathartic function was extrapolated from parliamentary research (Smith 1938; Pakenham 1990; Birch 1971; Jewell and Patterson 1973). No evidence was presented which contradicts this logic. There was a sense within many of the interviews, however, that respondents were more capable of recognising the logic behind the cathartic propositions than applying it to case study examples. This often resulted in the interviewees discussing the cathartic abilities of a parliamentary system generally or acknowledging the importance of the function without specifying why. Nevertheless, there is enough evidence from officials and parliamentarians from this section and chapter five to argue that the cathartic functions are relevant to the management of crisis. The reduction of extreme emotions can be related to avoidance, policy compliance and post-crisis sanitization. Two findings, however, stand out. First, post-crisis inquiries which incorporate regional stakeholder meetings, like the one initiated by the ARDC Committee, can play an important

sanitizing role post-crisis by allowing those affected to vent anger at those within the political system. This function, moreover, appears to be more important than the Committee's policy learning and reform role (see below).

In 1970, Pakenham claimed that a parliament could be 'a safety valve or a way of letting off steam in a political system where nobody got all he wanted and/or where the government was not willing to let everyone have what they wanted' (Pakenham 1990: 89). What these findings also show is that the absence of a representative safety valve when interest group demands are not being met can result in direct action like that witnessed in 2000. In the case of the fuel protests, proper parliamentary representation, like the kind that Brynle Williams now provides, may have dissipated the build up of anger amongst farmers and hauliers by taking 'the smart out of the slap' of high fuel duty.

6.4 Parliamentary Scrutiny Functions

Theoretical Propositions

In chapters two and three claims were made about the benefits of studying parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms during crises. It was reasoned that parliamentary analysis might be an ideal institutional lens for the examination of post-crisis politics and lesson learning. A number of specific propositions about the ways in which parliamentary scrutiny could affect crisis responses were then derived from the literatures on crisis management and parliaments. First, it was theorised that the doctrine of ministerial accountability might lead to parliamentary influence over 'programmatic' or 'single loop' policy reforms prompted by crises. Second, it was claimed that the structures and norms of a parliamentary system could affect double 'loop' policy reforms. Finally, it was argued that scrutiny mechanisms could have a bearing on post-crisis politics because of their capacity to influence perceptions, and

subsequently, legitimacy dynamics. Threaded throughout the theoretical discussions in chapters two and three was an argument that the post-crisis period was likely to attract the largest amount of parliamentary involvement. This supposition was derived from the frequent reference made to parliaments within crisis management literature. However, these brief references, as chapter two stressed, are really intuitive assumptions rather than substantiated empirical conclusions about the specific role of parliaments. It remains to be seen, therefore, whether or not this stage of the crisis management cycle does in fact generate a large degree of parliamentary involvement.

Research Findings

Thirty four of 39 interviewees indicated that parliamentary scrutiny had effects relevant to the case studies or to crisis management generally. However, when their responses are disaggregated by effect, it becomes apparent that some of the theoretical propositions are supported more than others. For example, the expectation that lesson learning requirements would encourage significant parliamentary involvement post-crisis proved to be incorrect. In fact, the links between specific policy reforms and parliamentary influence post-crisis appear to be almost non-existent in all but the Scottish exam crisis. However, an empirical connection is established below between the perceptions of civil servants and the doctrine of ministerial responsibility. These findings illustrate how the existence of a system of parliamentary accountability influences bureaucratic perceptions of policy choice, not only in the post-crisis period but also in the acute decision making stages of a crisis. Backbench committees also have horizon scanning capacities pre-crisis and an ability to act as a communication channel between government and affected groups in the acute-stage of a crisis. In terms of the politics of crisis management, there is a significant amount of evidence showing how parliamentary scrutiny affected the legitimacy of crisis management authorities.

Parliamentary Scrutiny and Crisis Management Learning

Questions about the ability of each parliament to enhance post-crisis learning and influence policy reform tended to provoke negative responses. Very few examples of specific policy change were identified. Although some lessons were attributed by the interviewees to parliamentary influence in each case, they can only be classified as very minor single loop changes. One significant exception to this pattern, already discussed in terms of 'issue escape', relates to the involvement of the Scottish Parliament in the reform of the SQA post-exam crisis.

Foot and Mouth

The parliaments were not important in terms of post-FMD lesson learning. The Common's Agriculture Select Committee and the Welsh Assembly's Agriculture and Rural Development Committee (ARDC) both produced reports after the epidemic. These recommended a series of issues that the Anderson Inquiry should investigate further. However, the interviewed committee members were generally conservative about the impact of their reports. For example, the Agriculture Committee's Chairman at the time, David Curry, stressed that the role of the Committee was 'to keep the Government on its toes' rather than propose specific policy lessons. The Chairman could only provide one example of the Committee affecting policy change post-epidemic:

The Foot and Mouth issue was the control of the import of beef, particularly jungle beef, and we came back to it around every six months to look at controls of imports at airports and how we were controlling information on the passengers, that sort of thing and I think we had a real influence in shaping government policy. I don't believe it boosted public confidence but it certainly kept government massively on its toes because we wouldn't go away. That's when the select committee is at its best. It's too easy to do a big report and to wave goodbye to it and I think you've got to have a persistence to come back and say to the government we're going to re-open this in six months time and see where you've got to. I think that's the Committee at its best. (interview, David Curry)

However, even this example of parliamentary influence was challenged by other Committee members (interviews, Owen Paterson, Lembit Opik). Owen Paterson, for example, stated that he had taken a great interest in the issue of meat imports post-epidemic. He argued that the Government had totally ignored the Committee and that, 'we are wide open today. We are still completely open. We are still totally vulnerable to Foot and Mouth as we speak this afternoon, we have learnt nothing from this outbreak and these reports are worthless' (interview, Owen Paterson).

The Chairman of the Welsh ARDC also stated that his Committee's role was not to offer specific policy proposals but to oversee their implementation. In relation to contingency planning reform, for example, the Chairman stated:

I don't think I'm competent to judge whether it's a good contingency plan. All I want as a politician is that the best person for making a contingency plan does it and that the best process for making sure it stays live and up-to-date is carried out because I'm not the person to draw up a contingency plan or judge whether it's right but it's having a plan and having it updated regularly and having it at the front of government thinking. (interview, Glyn Davies)

Mirroring David Curry, the ARDC Chairman stated that the importance of the Committee rested upon its potential to criticise the WAG, which ensured that officials were 'kept on their toes' in terms of the pace and nature of policy reform (interview, Glyn Davies). It was also believed that the Committee provided an outlet for industry stakeholders to raise issues about policy reform should they feel the need. If there were problems, the Chairman argued, the Committee would have been contacted and there would have been 'a closer, tighter form of oversight' (interview, Glyn Davies).

These arguments, unsurprisingly, found support amongst the DEFRA and WAG officials who confirmed that each parliament's policy input into post-FMD reforms was minimal.

DEFRA officials stated that Parliament's only role in the reforms was to ensure that a lesson learning process was ongoing and that its input into specific reforms was residual (interviews, UK Officials D, E, H). Parliamentary members were not included in the development of contingency plans or consulted during the creation of the revised plans. The completed documents were merely laid before Parliament for ratification. In Wales, it was also suggested that the ARDC was not greatly involved because the WAG was doing what was expected of them, which meant that the Committee's role was more about general oversight than substantive policy input (interviews, WAG Officials B,C).

The Scottish Parliament's input into post-FMD reforms can be described as nonexistent rather than negligible as no evidence can be found to indicate any meaningful Scottish parliamentary involvement. Three reasons were provided by officials and MSPs for the minimal parliamentary role. First, the independent inquiries supplanted the Scottish Parliament (interviews, Alex Ferguson, Elaine Murray). Second, the Scottish response was comparatively effective which meant there were no political demands for Executive resignations or reforms (interviews, Alex Fergusson, SE Official B). Third, the Scottish Executive had already drawn the appropriate lessons from the crisis and was seen to be implementing the requisite reforms (interviews, SE Officials A, B).

The FMD contributions were something of a surprise. The expectation was that the representative assemblies would play a substantial role in post-event learning. Given the scale, severity and negative perceptions surrounding the FMD crisis, it was expected that this case-study in particular would provide substantive evidence of parliamentary involvement. However, the overwhelming reaction to this suggestion amongst interviewees, aside from the minor points raised by the UK and Welsh Chairmen, were negative. There is a consensus amongst officials and parliamentarians that the representative assemblies were not involved

in the details of policy development post-FMD. Their only role appears to be as latent watchdogs, overseeing a process of change that was largely independent and disregarding of specific parliamentary input.

The Fuel Crisis

Two fuel protest interviewees, Michael Connarty MP and Kenny MacAskill MSP, linked their own acute-stage roles to post-event reforms. Mr. Connarty explained that after the crisis the creation of formal policy forums, which connected the UK Government to road haulage groups was important as it allowed the 'legitimate' protestors a formal voice. Mr. Connarty asserted that it was the job of MPs with blockades in their constituencies to provide an unofficial channel that connected the legitimate voices within the protests to the Government during the crisis. The formalisation of relationships afterwards was viewed by Mr. Connarty as validation of the conduit role that he and others performed:

Out of it came a group from the road haulage industry that could talk to the Chancellor and to the Treasury in a really sensible way without strikes and then you didn't have the radicals that wanted to keep the thing going for the sake of bringing as much annoyance to the government and feeling better about themselves. So we did play a role and that group now plays its role. (interview, Michael Connarty)

Kenny MacAskill also suggested that the only connection between the Scottish Parliament and post-crisis change related to the formalisation of a relationship between the Scottish Executive and the Road Haulage Association (RHA):

I think Parliament cemented the place of the RHA because Parliament, it allowed them to participate. At the end of the day they don't seek to be the government, they don't wish to be elected representatives but they do wish to have their voice heard and I think they have become mainstream ... part of the benefit of the Scottish Parliament is that we now all know each other, it's not like before when you have a few senior civil servant mandarins flying down to London every so often and being informed of what decisions are being taken, so I think the Scottish Parliament during that crisis helped to bring the RHA into the body of the kirk.

(interview, Kenny MacAskill)

The formalisation of these unofficial links represent one small example of parliamentarians affecting post-event policy change. In this case, the conduit role that these parliamentarians performed was believed to be a variable affecting (to a small degree admittedly) the creation and membership of policy forums which brought certain groups 'insider' status. However, neither of these small reforms can be connected to institutionalised scrutiny functions.

English Exam Crisis

All of the English exam crisis interviewees stated that the most important lesson to be learned from the grading problems was that future qualification reform must be implemented and evaluated slowly. However, the extent to which this lesson had been learned within government, and the role that Parliament played in its creation and communication, were areas that caused divergences of opinion.

The Education and Skills Committee Report into the re-grading issue, according to one senior DfES official, 'hammered home a very important lesson publicly and placed it as a matter of public record', which was that time must be taken when reforming qualifications. Any reform must be piloted and time had to be taken to evaluate and analyse how changes 'bed down', because even small changes have a 'ripple effect' across the whole education system (interview, UK Official G). This official stated that it was very important that this lesson was on the public record and that the Government had also publicly conceded that it had learned this lesson in its Response to the Committee (HC 1026 2003). The real value of the Report, therefore, was not related to specific policy input. It was that that this public promise remains on the record and could be used by officials when advising future ministers about policy reform. The Report would be returned to by this official in order to stress that 'we promised no quick changes'. This was beneficial to officials within the Department

because, ‘two, three, four or five years down the line, as ministers change, there is a public promise not to change too quickly, which is a good basis for policy reform’ (interview, UK Official G). However, a second official who was involved in the exam crisis contended that although the Education and Skills Committee Report was accurate and the process of inquiry fair, the Report did not have a great deal of influence within government. When asked whether or not the Report had taught the Government that fast, politically driven reform timetables could incubate policy problems, this official replied:

I think that would be a really good lesson but I don’t think that people would abide by it. I just think it will scare lots of people into not doing things fast for a bit and then they will overturn it so I wouldn’t say that is the biggest lesson that has been *learned*. (interview, UK Official E, emphasis added)

A member of the Education and Skills Committee stated that the Government could not publicly refer to the Report in the immediate aftermath of the crisis. This would have been interpreted as an acknowledgement that mistakes had been made. However, it was argued that the Report would influence DfES decision making across a broader timeframe:

Does it affect what the government does? In the short-term the answer is usually no because if a select committee produces a report saying the government is wrong, the government aren’t going to lose face by saying “yeah we’re totally wrong, we’ll scratch all that” but what you do see is a year, two years, three years later sometimes what comes out is stuff that was in select committee reports that the government played down or ‘pooh poohed’. You see it coming back in the next set of government legislation or in the next ministerial statement a year later. I have seen that happen in terms of reports we have done a few years ago. So in the short-term it won’t change what the Government is doing because they won’t lose face by admitting things but you will see aspects of it coming through later. When it suits them they will use the findings. They will say “oh the select committee said, so well take notice of that” whereas if it was the Liberal Democrats or the Tories saying it... So in the short-term it doesn’t have that much impact but it can do further down the road. (interview, Paul Holmes)

Parliamentary officials also cited the Government’s commitment to slower paced reform as the most significant lesson to come out of the Committee Report but again expressed doubt

about the extent of the government's commitment to this lesson (interviews, UK Officials A, B).

The Scottish Exam Crisis

The Scottish exam crisis represents a significant exception to the pattern of minimal parliamentary involvement in relation to reform. The discussion of the 'issue escape' function already outlined how the Parliament's committees managed to influence a series of 'single loop' reforms which culminated in the SQA Act.

Representative Structure and Policy Choice: The Impact of Ministerial Accountability

Chapter three examined Judge's (1993: 125-126) argument that representative structures can affect policy making behaviour by shaping the way in which politicians and bureaucrats perceive themselves and their responsibilities (see also Rhodes 2000: 62; Marsh *et al.* 2001: 28; Richards and Smith 2002: 48). These claims were used to develop a specific proposition: that representative structures could be connected to crisis management agency because civil servants, when deliberating on policy choices, would be affected by the enveloping framework of the parliamentary system that they operate within. Strong evidence was found amongst civil servants that parliamentary scrutiny functions, even if inactive, can influence policy deliberations. Officials questions about the links between post-crisis policy deliberations and specific perceptions that they have about the parliamentary system. Ten out of 16 officials from England, Scotland and Wales stated that they instinctively considered the principles, procedures and political realities of parliamentary scrutiny when considering policy options. The evidence that emerged from this line of questioning does not just connect post-crisis policy thinking to the parliamentary system; more specifically, it would appear that decision making *across the stages of crisis management* is informed and conditioned by civil service perceptions of the doctrine of

ministerial responsibility.

Three officials involved in the response to the FMD crisis affirmed that the existence of forms of parliamentary scrutiny conditioned their thinking about policy decisions (interviews, UK Official H, WAG Officials B, C). In England, a DEFRA official stated that he instinctively took Parliament into account when he was considering policy choices because he had to consider the political risk attached to important decisions. Asked whether Parliament is instilled within the thinking of senior civil servants and whether or not that meant a connection existed between Parliament and policy, this official replied:

It is. Particularly amongst policy people and increasingly amongst senior operations managers. It's an understanding of risks, it's about risk, and some of those risks are political when they are coming through Parliament and it's about understanding what those risks are and taking a step back from the immediate policy which has been designed to do a specific job and asking what the wider context is and that includes Parliament ... you have to understand that when you're drawing up a policy. Yes you're impartial and objective but it's being impartial and objective while understanding the context of the things around you. (interview, UK Official H)

Evidence of this instinct was also presented by WAG officials (interviews WAG Officials, A, B). One policy officer, for example, stated:

As a civil servant my loyalty is to the Minister and to the Assembly Government not the broader political core down at the Bay, nor indeed the outside constituency, but having said all of that, the job I do in terms of advising and discussing issues with Carwyn [the Minister] means that you have to have regard to the *Real Politik* in which you're working and the impacts on the different constituencies outside of the Minister. It is something which becomes instinctive because you're there [the Assembly] all the time. ... You put advice to your minister, he takes the decision and the following week you're being grilled by committee or there is a debate in plenary, so I think it is instinctive to take that into consideration as you do your job. (interview, WAG Official B)

In Wales, the resilience and emergencies official involved in the fuel crisis argued that the simple fact that the doctrine of ministerial responsibility had the potential to damage a civil

servant's career could not be underestimated. Senior civil servants, he argued, unconsciously, 'observe the democratic process observing them' which can create a cautious decision making style wherein careful consideration of political ramifications precedes action. This instinct, it was argued, was not always conducive with the need to act quickly during a crisis (interview, WAG Official A).

Two civil servants, interviewed in relation to the English exam crisis, provided evidence which confirmed that the existence of forms of parliamentary accountability conditioned their thinking and influenced the manner in which they considered decisions (interviews, UK Officials E, G). One official involved in the exam crisis recalled, for example, her sense of disbelief at the manner in which QCA officials regarded the importance of Parliament. An excellent example of the way in which experienced civil servants have the constitutional importance of Parliament ingrained into their working practices is provided in her statement that, 'they [QCA staff] didn't see that that [Parliament] was something very big and solid at the centre of the whole way in which government works' and that 'if I had a Parliamentary Question when I was in the Department and it had to be done for the next day, you would stay as long as you needed to stay on until you did it, *because you just did, not that anyone told you to, you just knew you had to*' (interview, UK Official E, emphasis added). Another official, also involved in the exam crisis, was asked whether or not being enveloped by the parliamentary system affected how civil servants think and act in relation to policymaking reform. This official stated that she felt, 'conditioned by it because she had been a civil servant for so long' and that she was 'attuned to Parliament' because it was something she had lived with throughout her career (interview, UK Official G). Asked whether or not Parliament influenced civil service decision making consciously or unconsciously, this official surmised that most senior civil servants were consciously aware of their accountability obligations because they receive official training about parliamentary

procedure and constitutional conventions. This type of training was cited as a tangible way in which civil servants are conditioned to take account of Parliament. After considering the question further, this official also stated that she had become unconsciously conditioned by Parliament and that in her daily work she would consider parliamentary implications because she was, 'so used to it that it has become second nature to think, how will that go down in Parliament?' (interview, UK Official G). According to this interviewee, the doctrine of ministerial responsibility, even if actual scrutiny is not ongoing, does affect the prospective behaviour and policy choices of officials because all senior civil servants that work within policy departments will make mistakes, usually in the initial period of a new post, and:

When you get something wrong, and most usually do fairly quickly into their careers, Parliament makes you realise very quickly that Parliament is watching and that the minister is watching and that you are being scrutinised and that you have to get things right. Once you make that mistake, you don't make it again. You will always reflect on the parliamentary angle. (interview, UK Official G)

The argument that policy officials will always 'reflect on the parliamentary angle' once they realise that 'Parliament is watching' was reinforced by an official involved in the Scottish exam crisis. This official recalled her experience of parliamentary scrutiny:

It was horrible. Honestly, I didn't like it at all. When the evidence went to the Committee and they made that public all kinds of things that I had written, letters I had sent to the SQA and so on, started cropping up in the media and elsewhere. You never write things thinking that. *I have never approached things in quite the same way since. I'm much more conscious that anything I write might find itself in the public domain. You become much more aware of how that can be.* (interview, SE Official E, emphasis added)

When asked if bureaucratic perceptions of parliamentary accountability could be linked to policy choices, the same official replied:

That anticipation is a core civil service skill. To be able to read how things are going to be in the Parliament and act accordingly. ... It will even drive the

[ministerial] advice that you give. You might explicitly put it into the advice for a minister, you know “the options are a, b and c, a will play really badly in Parliament, here’s why” but sometimes you don’t even have to do that, because it’s even more understood by ministers. Any half decent minister will have that instinct. (interview, SE Official E)

Two more officials from the Scottish Executive also suggested that the existence of parliamentary forms of accountability conditioned policy choices (interviews, SE Officials C, D). For one official, the existence of parliamentary scrutiny:

Helps us in that we should always be mindful that whatever we do should be able to stand up in the light of a subsequent public inquiry. I think it’s important that everybody is in a position to justify their actions after the fact. ... It’s not the threat of sanctions but the potential for proper parliamentary scrutiny irrespective of whether they actually take up the option of doing that which is useful because it does focus minds. ... You can’t forget that it is there. (interview, SE Official D)

According to another member of the Contingencies Division:

That kind of awareness, that the Parliament is a very real player and that, because of the electoral system, under any conceivable result, there is not going to be a situation where the Executive can steamroller policy through without thinking about the parliamentary dimension. That is very much imbued in us. It’s imbued in us because we have seen it and experienced it and many of us have been questioned, grilled, by MSPs in committees, so you’re very well aware that it’s a powerful institution and that ministers are absolutely accountable to it and have to be responsive to coalition administrations. You’re not thinking about it every second of the day, you’re not always thinking how will Parliament react to that but it’s always there in the background because you know that’s what ministers, that’s what they think ... So it’s always there and in terms of the link between Parliament and policy, Scottish parliamentary committees will come up with ideas and that will go into the whole mix of policymaking, so I don’t know if I buy the suggestion that there is no link between policy and Parliament after a crisis. The Scottish Executive is part and parcel of a system that has got Parliament in it in a different way to Westminster because of the PR system and because of the way the committees are set up, so I noticed a very stark difference, a very different culture between Whitehall and here. You forget Parliament at your peril here. (interview, SE Official C)

Horizon Scanning and Constituency Communication

In response to questions about lesson learning a number of interviewees gave evidence

which suggested that parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms may be relevant to horizon scanning and communication between constituency and government.

Constituency duties were not found to be particularly important to horizon scanning prior to these case studies. However, four MPs, one Assembly Member and two officials did argue that parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms could be relevant to scanning (interviews, Brian Donohoe, Gwyneth Dunwoody, Andrew Miller, Owen Paterson, John Marek, WAG Official A, SE Official D). The fuel protests represents a particularly interesting case in this regard because in July 2000 the Transport Sub-Committee of the Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee published a report which recorded the growing concerns of hauliers after the 1999 Budget (HC 296 2000). The opening paragraph of that Report made reference to the growing feeling of unrest within the industry, which was at that point beginning to manifest in a 'vigorous campaign against what they perceived as unfair levels of taxation, particularly on fuel and Vehicle Excise Duty, which included attempts to disrupt the flow of traffic in cities and towns, and on motorways' (HC 296 2000 para.1). Not surprisingly, the MPs interviewed in relation to the fuel crisis claimed that this was one example of a parliamentary scrutiny mechanism identifying emerging problems (interviews, Gwyneth Dunwoody, Brian Donohoe, Andrew Miller). Committee members also noted that their Report did not receive much attention from the Government:

The Transport Committee had, and still does to a great extent, this ability to look into the future, to look futuristically and get a very clear indication as to what is likely to happen. In terms of that crisis I think it was seen and understood that there would be a problem at some point ... I don't know if they [the civil service] ignore us, they may well just think that we're a bit of an annoying aspect to their life and what they rely on in that sense is that we're going to be 'here today gone tomorrow' but some of us have stuck around a bit longer than they thought and because of that it often gets to the point where they have to do something about the issues we raise. ... I came off the Transport Committee just after the last general election and I came off because it got to the point where it was being ridiculed before it even presented any report. The Secretary of State and the ministers have a very, very low opinion of the Committee and what it's achieving

and that comes over very loudly and clearly when you're talking to the Secretary of State or any of the ministers in the Department. (interview, Brian Donohoe)

Owen Paterson MP, also claimed that parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms could often identify problems which the public or the government were unaware of (interview 26 April 2006), as did one member of the Scottish Executive's Contingencies Division (interview, SE Official C). John Marek and a WAG official, when asked about the potential of parliamentarians to horizon-scan via constituency roles both argued that the only way in which Assembly Members could become aware of emerging problems was through their membership of committees (interviews, John Marek, WAG Official A). Both AM and official, however, stressed that the capacity of a committee to horizon-scan is limited. If committees did recognise an emerging crisis, they argued, it would be an unintended consequence of an inquiry that was focused on other objectives.

Nine interviewees also stated that parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms were an effective constituency to government communication channel. All the interviewed members of the Common's Agriculture Select Committee recalled how acute-stage evidence-taking sessions were often used by MPs to communicate 'feedback' about local disease control and to 'errand run' specific constituency issues directly to the Minister and the CVO (interviews, David Curry, Lembit Opik, David Borrow, Mark Todd, Owen Paterson). Examples of this can be seen throughout the transcripts of the Committee's sessions during the epidemic. In most instances, the Member informs the Minister and the CVO of localised problems and then raises specific cases where constituents need help. For example, Mark Todd, throughout several sessions with the Minister provided feedback about the overly bureaucratic manner in which livestock movement licenses were granted in his constituency. In each instance, the MP managed to 'errand run' specific constituent cases and receive pledges from the Minister that those cases would be examined (see for example, HC 363-i

2001: q.9-11; HC 363-iii 2001: q. 226-232). Mark Todd's use of the Committee in this sense was certainly not unique. Other Committee Members throughout the sessions also fed back information about specific policy problems and gained ministerial promises to investigate individual cases. For example, Owen Paterson's relaying of information about local slaughter delays on the 23 April can be considered an excellent example of policy feedback (HC 363-i 2001: q. 44) while Michael Jack also managed to get a commitment from the Minister to examine one constituent's application to the Welfare Disposal Scheme after a lengthy debate (HC 363-i 2001: q. 350-361).

The Chairman of the Welsh Assembly's ARDC also stated that his Committee was an excellent forum for communicating with industry stakeholders and for channelling their issues to the minister. This communication function, in his eyes, was the most important consequence of evidence taking sessions during the crisis:

It was a help, it was a big help because what we do is televised and because the farming representatives were always at the meetings and I know that all the members were meeting with the farming representatives beforehand and they were gathering all the information up before every meeting, it was a really good venue and a lot of people were watching us ... the most important role it had was to be a public forum for the industry and all those affected to engage with the government of the day, it was almost like an in between link. We were holding discussions and debates, which were holding the minister to account and obviously that was being watched and the questions being asked heavily influenced by those being affected and that to my mind was its principal role. The Committee is not a policy development body and that was its biggest role, that link job. (interview, Glyn Davies)

Researching the specifics of what was said in ARDC evidence-taking meetings during the epidemic, however, is impossible because each meeting is recorded in summarised minute form rather than verbatim transcript. These minutes do record committee members communicating general and specific issues to the Minister, which most probably originated from concerns they heard from constituents or industry stakeholders (see Welsh Assembly

Record, ARDC Committee, 11 April 2001). However, Assembly Members, unlike their English counterparts, do not appear to have pursued the Minister about individual cases during committee meetings.

The transcripts from the Scottish Parliament's Rural Development Committee during the epidemic do not record any MSPs raising specific cases with the Minister or his officials. Like the Welsh Assembly Members, MSPs raise issues, which are clearly constituent concerns but they do so in a general sense without pursuing specifics (see for example, SP RDC OR 20 March 2001, col.1783; 3 April 2001, col. 1866). Elaine Murray, a Committee member, stated that its role was about communicating outward to farmers in order to explain the reasoning behind response decisions, not about communicating specific issues into SEERAD (interview, Elaine Murray). Committees, therefore, must be considered to be a government to constituency communication channel in this case.

Parliamentary Scrutiny and Crisis Management Politics

In chapters one and two modern crisis management perspectives were used to outline a conceptualisation of crises as political events, which 'become the focal point for intense and protracted political contestation' (Boin and 'tHart 2001: 184), and act as, 'dynamic forces in ongoing processes of legitimisation, delegitimation and re-legitimation ... in particular [relation to] the prevailing patterns of political and administrative authority' (Boin and 'tHart 2001: 31). Chapter one and three also outlined a proposition, derived from Easton's (1965) concept of legitimacy, which described how parliaments could affect the legitimacy of specific authorities (policies, organisations, actors). At the core of that argument was a claim that parliaments might be capable of influencing perceptions about the performance and behaviour of authorities. Previous sections have already substantiated that claim in relation to, for example, symbolic parliamentary outputs. By affecting perceptions of

specific authorities, parliaments can affect legitimacy dynamics. Evidence is presented below which reinforces this claim further with specific reference to parliamentary scrutiny. The findings below reveal that parliamentary scrutiny can stabilise the legitimacy of authorities during uncertain crisis periods but also that the adversarial nature of accountability mechanisms can lead to a decline in public confidence and support in authorities; the entrenchment of a sense of crisis; and, in the words of one interviewee, a form of accountability which led to ‘blood on the carpet’ (interview, Cathie Peattie).

Emphasising the Legitimacy of Specific Authorities

Evidence from various civil servants indicates that parliamentary scrutiny can have positive benefits for the legitimacy of crisis managers. Officials who find themselves managing crises are, because of the very nature of crises, in an abnormal position. As chapters one and two illustrated, crisis managers, despite the growing sophistication of preparedness policies, still find themselves having to manage in uncertain situations. Ten officials stated that in these circumstances, their attachment to parliamentary scrutiny can be important as it emphasises their legitimate status. The value of parliamentary scrutiny, according to these respondents, is that it underlines their legitimate right to take operational decisions. In essence, they believed that the provision of information to accountability mechanisms could reinforce their existing legitimacy in a period when their status and activities could come under question. These contributions link with David Beetham’s argument, examined in chapter three, that:

Where the powerful have to concentrate most of their efforts on maintaining order, they are less able to achieve other goals; their power is to that extent less effective. The classroom teacher provides a typical example. If pupils do not share a belief in the value of education, on which the justification for the teacher’s power is based, or have no respect for the individual teacher, he or she will have to devote correspondingly greater energies to maintaining order than teaching. To that extent the purposes for which power is held will not be achieved, and this may lead in turn to a further erosion of legitimacy. (Beetham

One senior crisis manager within the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) explained that the Secretariat categorise crises by severity and that each different category triggers a variant response. A local emergency would mean that Whitehall would be informed but play no role. This would constitute a category one crisis, whereas a category five would be on the scale of the World Trade Centre attacks. This official noted that it was most likely that the Secretariat would have to deal with crises falling into categories two, three and four. The case was made by this official that negative perceptions could develop around authorities if parliamentary forms of scrutiny did not receive accommodation during these crises. According to this official, it is 'vitaly important for accountability purposes that Parliament is kept constantly up-to-date and that there is a minister there that can provide information at the time which can then be pored over, particularly post-crisis ... If the minister doesn't communicate and communicate quickly questions will start being asked about other areas of performance generally and public doubts could manifest themselves' (interview, UK Official F). This is an excellent example of the relationship between parliamentary scrutiny and the legitimacy of authorities. By reporting their activities to Parliament, crisis management authorities reduce the likelihood that their activities will attract de-legitimising criticisms from within the political system. Reporting to Parliament also highlights the connection between their operations and approved democratic principles and shows that they are operating within a 'definable range' (Easton 1965) of accepted behaviour. Another official explained the importance of Scottish parliamentary scrutiny in this regard:

It is absolutely incumbent on ministers and officials that they keep Parliament informed of what's happening during a crisis because their authority is conferred on them by the Parliament and they are part of the Parliament and that just goes with the territory and ministers ignore that at their peril as they can lose their own legitimacy if they don't report to it as it's not just a question of legitimising specific actions in a crisis but also the office holders themselves. (interview, SE Official C)

Seven officials involved in the FMD crisis argued that providing information to parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms emphasised their legitimacy during an uncertain period (interviews, UK Officials, C, D, H; WAG Officials, B, C; SE Officials A, B). For example, one SEERAD official, who performed front line duties, explained that:

Reporting back information has benefits when it comes to making future decisions in the field. It gives you a little more certainty to know that your superiors and the Parliament are aware of the situations you are facing ... There is a need for strong and timely communication one way but there is also absolutely a need to give people in the field discretion and getting that balance isn't always easy. Ministers at the end of the day always need to be accountable and officials too. Should they be accountable at the end and left alone to get on with it or should they be accountable while they are trying to do A and answer to B at the same time? I think the balance we struck in terms of reporting to Parliament was just about right. Ultimately though, you can't wander too far from Parliament when you're in the field because you're still a public official. The further that you wander from that link and the longer you are away from that link the greater is the risk you take that when you do come back, you will find it more difficult to be accountable, so I think that's something that we all, whether it's policy or operations, have to bear in mind, that we have that accountability at the end of the day. I can distinctly remember saying to myself "I'll just have to do this and carry the can later". (interview, Scottish Executive Official A)

A second SEERAD official, while discussing the role of the interviewee above, commented:

It's very important that the people on the ground are not involved in the policy or the politics; that they are basically the delivery agents. So x in the field didn't have to worry about that, he just had to be told, the decision has been taken, the Minister will inform Parliament, you can get on with it and that's what they did. It takes the field out of the politics. In Dumfries, I had authority to do anything I wanted to do once I had cleared it with the Disease Strategy Group, who would inform the Minister and the Parliament, which is really important. (interview, SE Official B)

A WAG official involved in the fuel crisis also stated that the Assembly should exist as a 'repository' for information during the acute-stage of crises. According to this crisis manager, the transmission of information from WAG to Assembly, leads to an exchange whereby acute-stage actions and WAG authorities are prospectively legitimised and given credibility (interview, WAG Official A).

These testimonies were all accompanied with an expectation that parliamentary scrutiny during acute-stages would not be excessive. Parliaments should, in the eyes of these officials, receive rather than act upon crisis management information. Recognition of the constitutional importance of parliamentary scrutiny was always presented alongside an argument that political interference from parliaments in the operations of a response should be minimal and that parliamentarians should recognise the pressures of crisis management and relax acute-stage scrutiny demands. For example, Parliament's role in the acute-stage of a category two, three and four crisis, according to the CCS member, is to be a 'receiver of information, it is not expected to input into policy or operations. That is not its role' (interview, UK Official F). This means that during the acute stages of a crisis management process, representative assemblies are only expected to pursue what Woodhouse (1994: 29) has defined as a minimal form of 'explanatory' accountability. However, officials believe that this kind of accountability justifies their authority to make contingent operational decisions. After the emergency phases pass, the information passed to parliamentarians is then expected to be used to initiate stronger types of 'amendatory' or 'punitive' accountability (Turpin 1989: 57) should they be required (interview, UK Official F). This official's argument was presented to other crisis managers. A majority agreed that parliamentary accountability demands should be more relaxed and parliamentary input restrained. This certainly seems to have been the case during the Welsh and Scottish FMD responses. One WAG official, for example, stated:

To be fair to the Assembly, both government side and opposition, I can't really recall an instance where people didn't show a pretty strong degree of understanding about the pressures we were under when taking such decisions, or an attempt to make political capital with that. Maybe at the time it was different, it might be it has become more rose coloured over time but I can't remember being put under pressure like that. It was definitely pressurised and it certainly was more frequent but there was also a degree of understanding that officials were quite a way out of their comfort zones here and they were managing a situation to the best of their ability and as I say from a political perspective there was quite a lot of understanding about it ... my intuitive recollection of it all is that there was

a job to do, to get done, people appreciated that and largely didn't bring politics into solving the crisis. (interview, WAG Official C)

Unfortunately, because this theme emerged during the process of interviewing, there was a limited opportunity to determine whether or not Westminster MPs agreed that scrutiny should be more relaxed during crises. However, there was a consensus among Welsh and Scottish representatives that they would not expect officials involved in a crisis response to submit to exhaustive forms of scrutiny. One MSP, for example, stated:

Politicians have to accept that people have to look at the crisis and run with it because the worst thing that you could do is have a situation where people refuse to take responsibility for trying to sort a particular thing out because they're worried about politicians point scoring. (interview, Cathie Peattie)

However, demands for explanatory accountability made by parliaments, even if restrained, can have implications for crisis management practitioners. For example, DEFRA, WAG, SEERAD and SEED officials all stated that departmental staff members had to be reallocated in order to answer parliamentary information demands and assist in briefing ministers for statements and debates. In some interviews the strain of providing information was described as detrimental to the crisis response (interviews, UK Officials C,D; WAG Official C; SE Officials A, E). Two DEFRA officials recalled in interview how they quickly became overloaded by demands for information and that Parliament was a very significant institution in this sense. One of these officials, with responsibility for animal disease contingency planning, stressed how it was impossible to train for, or simulate, the demands made by Parliament during a crisis and conceded that because it affected human resource capacity, it was an area that should be revisited in terms of future planning (interview, UK Official C). A second official argued that the burden that scrutiny places on departmental staff during these periods was, 'perhaps under-appreciated and under-analysed' within the reformed FMD contingency plans (interview, UK Official D). One member of the WAG

Agriculture Department balanced the demands of scrutiny with the benefits it provided:

First of all it is true to say that there is a very large amount of resource necessary to answer parliamentary and assembly questions, to make statements, to ensure that ministers are up to speed on the latest things that are going on so that they can inform the democratic processes whether they be committee sessions or plenary sessions or answering questions, so there is a big effort required to do that. Is that money well spent? Yes I think it probably is money well spent because that's part of the democratic process that you're serving in any country ... it is a very necessary part of local and national democracy and it does help to legitimise our actions. There was scrutiny throughout and that was its role. There was a not a time when it was asked or offered to contribute to policy decisions. (interview, WAG Official C)

A SEERAD official who had significant front line responsibilities in the Scottish response to FMD noted how:

Ministers want to look good in Parliament, they want to have all the detailed information at their fingertips, and that can be counterproductive in the sense that people from here [SEERAD] might be phoning up vets on infected premises that are trying to do something but their mobile phone is going off just so they can tell the Minister what is happening so that they can look good. So in that sense it can be counterproductive. (interview SE Official A)

Evidence of the detrimental effects that accountability obligations can have on crisis responses was also provided by officials involved in the fuel crises and the Scottish exam crisis (interviews, WAG Official A, SE Official E). One WAG official, for example, stated that during the fuel protests a limited number of policy officials were available for updating the Assembly, which meant that operational staff were diverted because of the need to prepare the Minister for parliamentary statements and questions (interview, WAG Official A).

Stabilising the Legitimacy of Authorities

Interviewees involved in the English exam crisis argued that the Education and Skills Committee helped to reduce the number of criticisms being levelled at the authorities

responsible for the assessment system. This was done by publishing a Report which, in the words of one interviewee, 'took the heat out' of the crisis and addressed the 'over-hyped and over-blown' allegations which had appeared in the media (interview, Paul Holmes). A senior policy official within the DfES was asked if the Committee's Report helped to rebuild confidence in those parts of the assessment system that may have lost some legitimacy because of the crisis. The official argued, like almost all the interviewed civil servants, that rebuilding confidence in the wake of a serious crisis is primarily an executive task (interview, UK Official G). It was more appropriate to state that the Committee Report, because it was well-balanced and not overly critical, did not deepen the sense of crisis. A critical report, according to this interviewee, would have meant a further decline in political and public confidence in the assessment system because it would have been, 'picked up and amplified by the press' (interview, UK Official G). This official had the impression that the Committee, 'acted as a kind of brake on the slide in confidence' because, 'it didn't rebuild confidence but stopped it getting worse' (interview, UK Official G). Other interviews corroborated this official's recollection. One member of the Education and Skills Committee, for example, stated:

I think because the Report, it didn't slate the Government, there were criticisms but because it never came out and said the Government's totally at fault here, it did help because if the press get a hold of a select committee report that is very critical then it can have a field day. (interview, Paul Holmes)

Another official who gave evidence to the inquiry suggested that the Report may have been one factor that ensured the survival of the QCA because it influenced the opinions of those who had the power to reform the assessment system:

The QCA survived, it's there now, it survived. Ken Boston [QCA Chief Executive] is getting a decent press and you could say, "how come it survived?" Has it just managed to slip under the net every time or has something changed in the perceptions of people that could have scuppered its future, that's made them

think “it’s OK, it might not be great but I don’t believe it’s a real bad apple, I do believe it’s worth keeping there”. The Report would have helped in that way. (interview, UK Official E)

The Report also appears to have had a positive effect amongst those affected by the crisis. Oliver Heald MP suggested that his constituents, particularly those who gave evidence to the inquiry, were happy that some form of parliamentary scrutiny had been enacted (interview, Oliver Heald).

The De-legitimisation of Specific Authorities

The evidence noted above suggests that parliamentary scrutiny can have positive effects for ways in which crisis management authorities are perceived. However, the expectation of officials, that scrutiny should be less partisan because of the abnormal demands of crisis management, did not materialise in all of the case studies.

Welsh FMD interviewees, for example, stated that AMs allocated blame in a way that affected public perceptions. The most interesting aspect of those contributions is that the interviewees stated that blame was directed towards Whitehall and the UK government rather than the WAG. Devolution appears to have created a situation where post-crisis blaming (as well as acute framing) can be inter-institutional in nature. For example, one AM, stated that:

As it [FMD] cleared, people became angry because more and more people saw the complacency at first, the lack of good quick decision making based on the Northumberland Report and they realised that people were guilty of neglect. Now in a sense, we here, because of the lack of powers, although tarred, we weren’t drowned by it, so DEFRA took most of the actual flack for it, they took most of the flack *because we blamed them as well*. (interview, Mick Bates, emphasis added)

Asked whether the Assembly contributed to the blaming of the UK government and whether

this affected support for UK authorities in Wales, an agricultural official who gave evidence to the Anderson Inquiry and the ARDC Inquiry replied:

They [AMs] did blame them [MAFF] and quite a lot of the time the fact that we didn't have powers to take a lot of decisions and the fact that one could argue that the untidiness surrounding who's in charge, who's taking decisions, who should I have brought this case to should it be Cardiff or Page Street or whoever all contributed to the deepening of the crisis. I'm not actually sure that some of that is legitimate but that's the sort of criticisms that were levelled at the UK government by AMs here. Whether the UK Government really noticed those criticisms is another matter. The public in Wales noticed them because the industry was saying very clearly at the time and has been saying ever since that the problems that we had were because of MAFF. (interview, WAG Official C)

Only one WAG official and one AM, from all those interviewed in relation to the fuel protests, suggested that the Welsh Assembly could damage public confidence in WAG organisations that under-performed during a crisis. Both these interviewees, however, stopped short of stating that this occurred in any meaningful way after the fuel crisis (interviews, WAG Official A, John Griffiths).

The exam crises constitute case studies in which problems 'snowballed' into crises of confidence. These were essentially legitimacy crises, which affected perceptions of the responsible authorities. Each interviewee involved in the English re-grading crisis was asked whether or not Parliament's scrutiny mechanisms, if it had not been in recess, could have stopped the decline in confidence and whether or not parliamentary procedures affected the legitimacy of authorities when it did return. Of the six interviewees, five declared that the adversarial nature of Parliament would have exacerbated rather than arrested the declines in confidence that created the crisis:

I think our parliamentary system is very confrontational and I don't think that helps confidence in a crisis. If it wasn't so confrontational you might imagine it would be helpful to have all those clever minds in the Houses of Parliament to be brought to bear on an issue in order to solve the problem but actually the minds at

that point tend not to focus on the problem but on the scape-goats and the heads that need to roll and the faults and the blame. Where you have conflict, where one side is trying to win over the other and where the stakes are high, you're not obliged to look for a resolution. (interview, UK Official E)

Two more officials also suggested that the adversarial nature of Parliament meant that it was likely to erode confidence in, rather than protect, the authorities that were perceived to be under-performing (interviews, UK Officials A, B). This was also the reason why one DfES policy officer stated that it was more important that the Department quickly initiated the QCA's internal inquiry and then the Tomlinson reviews. Executive actions were more effective at halting the slide in confidence than anything Parliament could have done (interview, UK Official G). These responses suggest that parliamentary scrutiny, initiated during the acute-stage of a crisis, is capable of de-stabilising public confidence in the actors and institutions involved in a crisis episode. However, the extent of parliamentary influence in this sense is likely to be quite limited. Certainly, those involved in the exam crisis argued that Parliament was more likely to have made matters worse. However, if acute-stage scrutiny was a strong influence over the dynamics of de-legitimacy in this crisis, the interviewees would have associated Parliament with the resignations of the Minister or the QCA Chairman. All the interviewees refuted the supposition that Parliament was a factor in the resignation of the Minister nor could they associate Parliament with other examples of de-legitimation. The juxtaposition of views here requires a nuanced explanation. On one hand, those involved in the crisis contended that parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms are too adversarial to have done anything other than worsen the crisis (if the Commons was sitting). On the other hand, when it was sitting, the adversarial nature of the House was not felt to have influenced the single largest example of de-legitimation - the resignation of the Minister - or any other significant event that would indicate a fluctuation in legitimacy. The explanation for this contradiction rests in the *extent* to which Parliament was perceived to be a variable affecting perceptions about performance. It is perhaps more accurate to posit an

argument that claims that, while Parliament is a variable that would not have improved public confidence in the authorities responsible for exam results, it was not influential enough to *significantly* de-legitimise the institutions and actors involved at that stage.

The Scottish exam crisis interviewees, however, all stated that the Scottish Parliament committee inquiries could be clearly connected to the allocation of blame within the SQA and the Scottish Executive (interviews Cathie Peattie, Marilyn Livingstone, Brian Monteith, SE Official E). The Deputy Convener of the Education Committee, for example, stated that ‘blood on the carpet’ was an inevitable element of the inquiry process:

We did have blood on the carpet, we had people that had to be forced to come to speak to us and people were removed from their positions as a result of the whole process. ... we didn’t set out to get blood on the carpet or apportion blame but we did because it’s difficult not to. It needed to happen. (interview, Cathie Peattie)

Brian Monteith argued that blame was fairly allocated by the Committee but suggested that the Scottish Parliament’s culture at that point in time meant that the scrutiny was ‘forensic’ rather than ‘judicial’:

The Parliament was forensic but it did not have enough teeth to remove the Minister. I wonder if this could be a cultural issue. There was not enough of a judicial atmosphere here as there usually is in Westminster. In Westminster, the Minister would have resigned immediately. The Parliament had no teeth here at the time, it was not aggressive, it was gnawing at Galbraith’s [the Education Minister] legs with its gums. There is a trade-off, I think, between that forensic detail, the pursuit of the technical details and the power of the Parliament to force accountability from a Minister. We got to the bottom of the truth but it really defused the situation. The Scottish Executive was not the cause but ministers should have fell on their swords because of the way the thing was handled once they became aware of the problems. Parliament couldn’t force that. (interview, Brian Monteith)

The SEED official involved in the crisis was asked whether the Scottish Parliament’s scrutiny of the crisis was concerned with lesson learning or pursuing ‘blood on the carpet’:

There was a feeling [amongst SEED officials] that the committee scrutiny was a quite legitimate thing to happen but there were points in the inquiry where there was a sense that they were looking for chinks in the official story and that was really because they wanted to get Sam [the Education Minister]. I never felt like they wanted to get me personally although I took quite a bit of personal flak, it was all about Sam. Certain MSPs made it worse because the party politics of it all meant that they wanted a scalp ... a bit of my frustration with the Committee was that the questioning was not quite as incisive as it could have been. I don't mean that it wasn't tough and personal but it could have got much more into the heart of the issues. So it could certainly have been farther up the learning end of the spectrum. As far as 'blood on the carpet' and resignations, it was a very uncomfortable process all round but in the end, well the Chief Executive of the SQA resigned, there was a bit of a clearout of the senior management either voluntarily or compulsorily and the Chair went. (interview, SE Official E)

When asked if those resignations could be directly attributed to the Parliament or if they would have happened anyway, the official stated that the majority of the resignations would have occurred regardless of the Parliament. It was claimed, however, that parliamentary scrutiny may have affected the Chair of the SQA's position because:

He went quite a bit later. It was a few weeks later. It was after the immediate fuss and bother. I don't think the media were howling for his head. You could conceivably attribute that to a parliamentary attitude which was saying "hang on a minute, if the minister's saying lets change the board, what was the chair's position in all of this? (interview, SE Official E)

Scrutiny and Accountability: Summary

Chapters two and three revealed a tendency within crisis management literature to refer to parliaments during the post-crisis stages of management but not to analyse their involvement in any great detail (see for example, Boin and 'tHart 2001; Kenis 2001; Boin *et al.*2005; Resodihardjo 2006). These repeated references were used to justify a claim that parliaments were likely to be heavily involved in 'lesson learning' and political dynamics during that stage. However, the proposition that parliaments offer an ideal institutional lens for the examination of post-crisis learning and reform has proved to be questionable in certain respects. Scholars wishing to analyse 'lesson learning' dynamics in the aftermath of UK

crises would do well to look to other actors and institutions first, as the connections between *specific reforms* and parliaments in these case-studies is almost non-existent. The unusual example of the Scottish Parliament post-exam crisis shows that representative assemblies can influence important 'single loop' reforms but this example is an unique exception to a pattern of small-scale or non-existent involvement in post-event reforms. This lack of involvement, moreover, represents an inter-institutional theme about the nature of parliamentary involvement in crisis management. This does not mean that the representative assemblies are totally redundant in terms of lesson learning and policy change analyses. Although no connection exists between parliamentary outputs and specific policy reform inputs, the mere existence of forms of parliamentary scrutiny produces effects. Parliaments are important as 'latent watchdogs'; the existence of which ensures that some form of lesson learning change takes place elsewhere. The threat of parliamentary oversight, even if it remains unconnected to specific authorities and reform proposals, has been recognised as important by parliamentarians and officials connected to lesson learning reforms. The argument that parliaments can have tacit effects in this area is illustrated further by the findings that connected the doctrine of ministerial responsibility to bureaucratic policy choices.

The doctrine and practice of ministerial accountability informs and conditions the thinking of important crisis managers. It is difficult to determine precisely what decisions and policies are influenced by the instinct that these bureaucrats share, yet they conceded repeatedly that the doctrine of ministerial accountability was 'imbued in their psyche' to such an extent that their policy deliberations were affected. This evidence is significant, particularly to those with an interest in examining the effects that larger government structures can have on civil service thought and action (Judge 1993; Rhodes 2000; Marsh *et al.* 2001). As was noted in chapter three, Marsh *et al.* (2001), to an extent, have already established a connection

between a civil service conception of the state ('the British political tradition') and Whitehall culture, policy and organisation. The findings above are similar in the sense that they re-emphasise this link with new evidence, which once again, connects civil service perceptions about the system they operate within to policy choices. However, the perceptions noted above are more specific. They do not relate to the wider concept of a 'British political tradition' (within which conceptions of representation are only one element) but to processes of parliamentary scrutiny specifically. The connection being drawn here, therefore, is between perceptions of parliamentary accountability and crisis-orientated policy choices. Thus, the arguments of Marsh *et al.* (2001) are reinforced and added to at a more tangible and specific level of analysis. This connection, however, must always be somewhat nebulous as it rests upon a relationship between conceptions of accountability and thoughts on decision making. This means that establishing causality between parliaments and specific policy choices is difficult; which is an inescapable problem. There is, however, no doubt that a connection exists. Parliamentary scrutiny affects the thinking of crisis managers when policy options are evaluated during crises. This finding also adds a new dimension to existing crisis management research, documented in chapter two, which has already connected broader paradigms of governance to specific decision making processes ('tHart 1994; Stern 1997). These authors have already stressed that political context affects lesson learning (Stern 1997: 75) and that analyses of crisis decision making cannot be divorced from 'broader institutional processes that govern the perceptions, calculations, and behaviour of real-world policymakers' ('tHart 1994: xi). The connection outlined above highlights the validity of these claims and indicates one specific way in which external political context influences internal policymaking behaviour. The significance of the evidence documented above to these authors is that it clearly identifies parliamentary scrutiny as one independent variable within the broader governance context. Claiming that structure affects decision making is analytically crude. This finding puts some more detailed flesh on the bone of

these blunt claims by identifying one specific component of the larger political context which affects crisis management thinking. The existence of the parliamentary 'watchdog' is a key component of the larger governance context which informs decision making across crisis stages. Parliaments, therefore, deserve further analysis from crisis scholars interested in analysing structure and agency effects during crisis episodes.

Crisis research has already claimed that analysing the 'modus operandi' of accountability mechanisms can provide insights into the political nature of contemporary crises (Rosenthal 2003; Boin *et al.* 2005). Scholars concerned with the politics of crisis management, however, would benefit from paying more rigorous attention to parliamentary scrutiny throughout crisis stages. Parliamentary scrutiny is an effective lens for the study of crisis politics because it can have positive and negative effects over the legitimacy of those authorities that find themselves in crisis situations. In this regard, scrutiny mechanisms can emphasise the legitimacy of crisis managers, act as a 'brake' on dropping levels of confidence, or from a negative point of view allocate blame and undermine the legitimacy of authorities. These examples show that parliaments are a useful lens through which the ebb and flow of specific legitimacy dynamics - the core of crisis management politics - can be examined.

Several findings also provide practical lessons for practising crisis managers who have to service parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms. First, the information demands created by parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms cannot be ignored in pre-crisis planning. While front-line operational staff may benefit from the knowledge that they are attached to democratic norms, central policy officials must have enough capacity to manage parliamentary demands for information. If weaknesses appear in the quality of explanatory accountability, delegitimising political criticisms may over-shadow effective front line performance. Second,

parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms can compliment the role of the individual member in terms of horizon scanning. If the Commons Transport Sub-Committee had been taken more seriously, the fuel protests may not have had such a large impact. Third, scrutiny mechanisms can provide feedback on ongoing crisis policy and a means through which communication lines between affected citizens and crisis response can be shortened. Once again, therefore, there is a case to be made that representative assemblies must be relevant to the operations of a crisis response.

6.5 Deliberation as Conflict Management

Theoretical Propositions

Parliamentary deliberation was one 'associated output function' presented in chapter three. It was suggested, after a discussion of deliberative and parliamentary literatures, that parliamentary deliberation could play a conflict management role during crises (Jewell and Patterson 1973; Cotta 1974; Dryzek 1990; Elster 1998; Miller 2003). The specific detail of this proposition is worth reiterating before the case study findings are presented.

Chapters one to three highlighted how episodes of crisis are often defined by the conflicts that they generate (Rosenthal *et al.* 1991: 213; Boin *et al.* 2005: 58-59). The characterisation of crises as periods of conflict allowed the argument to be made that a representative assembly's deliberations could affect the terms of some types of conflict, particularly if the pertinent actors are not part of the operational 'front line' of a crisis response. It is important to re-emphasise that these propositions do not relate directly to forms of 'bureau conflict' (Rosenthal *et al.* 1991) between operational agencies. They are instead concerned with political conflicts surrounding the responses. However, as earlier chapters explained, the demarcating line between operations and politics during crises is becoming increasingly

blurred. The nature and degree of political conflict gravitating around a crisis response does, therefore, have implications for its operational dimensions.

Two specific theoretical proposals were advanced under this broad argument. First, parliamentary deliberations, if equivocal in nature, could postpone or obviate acute political conflict or facilitate positive-sum compromises when agreement in the public eye is difficult to achieve. In other words, contentious issues could be defused when placed into deliberative processes (Jewell and Patterson 1973: 9; Cotta 1974: 209; Loewenberg and Patterson 1979: 59). Second, parliamentary deliberation could shape the preferences and attitudes of stakeholders who had their views represented in debates. This claim was derived from theoretical literature on deliberation, which states that the assessment of differing positions and the formulation and articulation of alternatives through argument can shape preferences and reconcile divergent views (Dryzek 1990: 10; Elster 1998: 6; Miller 2003: 183).

Null hypotheses were also posited in relation to the specific propositions outlined above. Parliamentary deliberations which are slow and ritualistic could easily intensify conflicts or promote a deepening of crises (Jewell and Patterson 1973: 9). Alternatively, deliberative procedures may have become weighted against backbench or Opposition members and biased towards the facilitation of executive-led outcomes. These kinds of 'inverted' procedure may exacerbate political tensions by causing a sense of frustration among parliamentary members and crisis stakeholders. The partisan nature of parliamentary deliberation was also recognised in chapter three. If preferences are being modified during debates, the partisan nature of modern parliaments means that they are perhaps more likely to be changed in a way that mirrors the *real politik* of party political culture. A high degree of partisanship in deliberations will, as chapter three contended, entrench, rather than reduce,

conflict during crises.

Research Findings

No evidence suggests that the nature of parliamentary deliberations postponed or obviated acute political conflicts or facilitated positive sum compromises during these crises. The complete unwillingness of all respondents to support this proposition is significant. The unanimity of these responses obviously provides support for the null hypothesis - that the nature of deliberation within British representative assemblies is likely to exacerbate conflict during crises. Indeed, one official contended that when crises were deliberated in Westminster, the nature of Parliament 'polarised' crisis management issues along party lines and entrenched the conflicting rhetoric of each party into 'political routine' (interview, UK Official A).

The second claim - that deliberation could shape preferences and attitudes in ways that reduce conflict - can also be rejected on the basis of these case studies. However, the unanimity seen above was not repeated. Four respondents stated that parliamentary deliberation was potentially relevant to the management of crises (interviews, Marilyn Livingstone, John Marek, Cathie Peattie, SE Official C). However, the remaining 35 interviewees either refuted the suggestion that parliamentary deliberation could reduce conflict in any way or argued in favour of the null hypothesis - that deliberations entrenched political conflict.

In Wales, the poll tax was used as an example to stress the potential impact of deliberations in this area by the Welsh Assembly's Deputy Presiding Officer, John Marek:

I would always say it's worth listening to the debate because it's never a black and white open and shut case and there is always another view and the question

arises; is there any way, without you abandoning your particular line that you want to take because you think it's going to benefit the nation, to take into account this opposing view? Debates can help with that. Sometimes you can't do this obviously and when we have had sectarian governments and we've had them under Mrs. Thatcher, she wouldn't be deterred from introducing the poll tax, it didn't matter who told her, you get the inevitable result, so it must be right to try and take account of other views. (interview, John Marek)

A Scottish Opposition MSP, however, argued that the Scottish Executive's partisan stance in fuel duty debates actually exacerbated the fuel crisis by increasing the animosity of protestors:

Parliament has got two aspects. You've got the gladiatorial showcase for the media and it also has backroom negotiations and so you've got to always have the staged debates, it's the point of the issue, whether it's the [Iraq] war, whether it's the fuel crisis, Parliament is the forum where you debate it and you have the cameras along watching so that will always be the case. I tend to think that the Scottish Executive would probably be much more diplomatic in their terminology if it happened again but I think that was symptomatic of the panic that was coming in at Westminster. There might have been more room for backroom negotiations if their language in the Chamber was more diplomatic. (interview, Kenny MacAskill)

One respondent, a Scottish MSP, indicated that parliamentary deliberations had reduced conflict during the Scottish exam crisis. The argument presented by Mrs. Peattie was that the Committee was the venue for non-partisan deliberations about the crisis. The committee setting, not the plenary, allowed a 'rational' debate to take place; and from these deliberations a cross-party consensus emerged (interview, Cathie Peattie). More importantly, however, Mrs. Peattie asserted that the consensus created within the Committee was carried into the plenary. Thus, an internal process of deliberation was thought to have shaped the attitudes of representatives in such a way that committee members formed a 'united front' during the plenary debate on the crisis:

In the committees people see a problem, particularly if it's an inquiry about a crisis, and get it out on the table; what are the issues? What do we need to look at? Who do we need to talk to? How will we do this? You debate the issues

there. When you debate crises in the Chamber, people have their stance, their party's stance, their particular role. It's political but the committees allow space to look at something properly. ... We have lots of debates in here and it's like motherhood and apple pie. Who makes the best kind of apple pie? If my party is politically committed to cinnamon in my apple pie, I'm going to argue for that and if another party likes something else... It might make for an interesting time in the Chamber but I don't think that's the best way of doing things. Interestingly, I think it [the exam crisis] made the people on the Education Committee, probably with the exception of Brian Monteith, work in a different fashion. It actually made us work together even in debates. I worked very closely with Mike Russell [SNP Frontbench Spokesman] on some of these issues and we found we were actually agreeing with each other in terms of the HMI and other things. There were areas that politically we disagreed on but on many issues there was a clear commitment to find a common ground. It gets it away from the apple pie debate, which is the standard debate every week, to the real issues, issues that we've looked at in committee and what we think needs to happen. (interview, Cathie Peattie)

Two more interviewees indicated that the Scottish Parliament was capable of performing this function although they stopped short of connecting their arguments to the specific case studies. For example, Marilyn Livingstone, a Scottish MSP involved in the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee inquiry into the exam crisis, was asked whether or not attitudes could be changed by parliamentary debate and if this could reduce conflict. Mrs. Livingstone declared that debates had this capability, but refuted that this occurred during the exam crisis because of its political nature (interview, Marilyn Livingstone).

Finally, one senior Scottish Executive official asserted that the non-partisan representation of stakeholders through the Scottish Parliament could help reduce conflict during crises. This official was not directly connected to the case study crises but has an important role in the Scottish Executive's Contingencies Division. As such, he was asked if he could see a potential role for the Parliament in this regard:

It certainly plays a role because it represents the views of constituents and stakeholders and to say to the Executive, "are you sure you've taken their view into account?" during a long running emergency it would be expected of MSPs. Certainly there is absolutely no doubt that they would have a legitimate role, "what about this particular group? Have you thought about this issue?" whether

it was in their particular constituency or not. A front bench opposition spokesman on agriculture, for example, you would expect them to be very close to the farmers unions and representing their views to government in debate. You would hope in a national emergency in a co-operative spirit. You would hope that they wouldn't be trying to score points off an emergency situation. (interview, S.E Official C)

Six FMD interviewees, however, presented counterfactual evidence that supported the null hypothesis. These interviewees argued that if a large-scale FMD epidemic were to return in the near future, the same conflicts that characterised the 2001 epidemic would return despite the six parliamentary debates that addressed the issues post-crisis (interviews, David Curry, Owen Paterson, Alex Fergusson, UK Officials, C, D, SE Official B). In particular, the decision to vaccinate or pursue a 'stamping out' policy was repeatedly raised as an example of a conflict that would return along with any new FMD epidemic. These contributions indicate that the post-crisis deliberations - which focused on future disease control and contingency planning reform - did not shape preferences or develop stakeholder consensus about the actions that should be taken during the next FMD outbreak.

Deliberation: Summary

Parliamentary deliberations did not affect the conflicts that characterised these crises in the ways in which the parliamentary and deliberative literature suggested that they could. While there was some evidence that deliberations have a potential capacity to shape attitudes in a way that may reduce conflict, the small n in support of this means that this potential should be considered negligible. This finding does not mean that parliamentary debates were totally irrelevant to these case studies. Previous sections have shown that parliamentary debates are an associated output function relevant to the management of these crises in other ways. What this finding clearly indicates, however, is that the *deliberative aspects* of parliamentary debates did not reduce conflict. This finding sheds light on various academic perspectives. First, it has (modest) implications for a larger debate about the nature of deliberation and

deliberative democracy. The finding does not challenge the claims of deliberative theorists concerning the ability of a deliberative process to transform preferences or reconcile divergent views. What the finding reveals, however, is that these parliamentary forums failed to create an authentic form of deliberation which could shape preferences during these crises. In other words, it is the representative assembly's failure to provide an effective deliberative venue, rather than the broader theoretical claims of deliberative theorists, that can be criticised. The conclusion that the parliamentary forum is not conducive to the realisation of ideal deliberative outcomes is hardly novel. This finding, therefore, adds weight to those arguments which stress that parliaments, for a variety of reasons, are often incapable of transforming preferences through deliberation (see for example, Weale 2002; Smith 2005). The finding is also important in relation to specific arguments about legislatures and conflict management (Jewell and Patterson 1973; Lowenberg and Patterson 1979). The lack of evidence for the conflict management role in British assembly deliberations does not challenge those authors directly, primarily because their arguments are derived from analyses of the US political system. Instead, they indicate that their conclusions are not applicable in the British context. The nature of deliberative parliamentary procedures initiated in British representative assemblies does not defuse conflicts during crises as appears to be the case in American legislatures. Finally, crisis researchers with an interest in conflict management (Rosenthal *et al.* 1991; Boin *et al.* 2005) should also take note; parliamentary deliberation as a unit of analysis through which conflict resolution could be researched should be treated with some caution.

Chapter Seven

Macro (System) Level Functions

Introduction

This chapter analyses the effects that representative systems have upon the management of crises. Chapter three set out a range of proposals relating to diffuse and specific support and the connection between representative structure and crisis management policy choices. The sections below, however, deal exclusively with the concepts of diffuse and specific support. This is because the only significant connection found between representative structure and policy choices related to the doctrine of ministerial responsibility. As such it was discussed in section 6.4 of chapter six.

Theoretical Propositions

Diffuse support, as defined by Easton (1965:272), is created when the citizens of a state tacitly accept the structure, ideology and institutions of a representative system. For diffuse support to be generated, representative processes need not necessarily produce satisfactory outcomes for citizens or function effectively. This is because it is predicated upon normative evaluations about the existence of political objects, and the ideological rationale for their existence, rather than the actual performance of such objects. For example, the centrepiece of a representative system - the national election - attracts diffuse support. The existence of an electoral process, and the principles underpinning that process, will receive tacit and widespread support amongst the populace even if many citizens are unaware of, or unhappy with, the actual operation of their electoral systems.

In chapter three it was argued that representative systems which generate diffuse support could be beneficial to the management of crises. It was proposed that diffuse support could

strengthen the resilience of a political system by providing a framework which could prevent or moderate certain crises or reinforce the ‘coping’ strength of the political regime. At a lower level, what Easton (1965:287) described as an ‘overflow’ of approval from structure to agency means that the existence of approved representative institutions could generate support and legitimacy for specific authorities. It was argued that the benefits of this overflow could be wide-ranging but some specific propositions were outlined in chapter three. These included: co-operation and compliance for policies; authority for the incumbents of crisis management roles; and, the enhancement of organisational stability.

The concept of specific support was also raised throughout chapters one to three. It was argued there that the representative assembly could perform observable functions that, although not connected to the legislative function, would have a bearing on the management of crises. These ‘associated output functions’, performed at the ‘individual’ and ‘institutional’ levels have been the subject of previous findings in chapters five and six. The effects that these functions create in terms of ‘legitimacy dynamics’ can be distinguished from diffuse support. Instead of authorities benefiting from support generated by the mere existence of representative institutions, associated outputs affect support by actively functioning to produce outcomes that affect evaluations of authorities.

Support for authorities, therefore, can be generated through evaluations of the *existence* of a parliamentary process, which is then associated with specific authorities (diffuse support overflowing) or by *the actual functioning and effects* of a parliamentary process (an associated output producing specific support).

Research Findings

Eighteen interviewees supported one or more of the propositions relating to diffuse support.

Questions about diffuse support, however, provoked considerable misinterpretation by interviewees. Many respondents either misunderstood the questions, which required the concept of diffuse support to be explained and then related to the proposals outlined above or, perhaps more tellingly, provided answers which connected associated output functions to support.

7.1 Diffuse Support and Resilience

Foot and Mouth

Fifteen interviewees, both officials and parliamentarians, stated that the existence of their parliamentary system, or one of its constitutive elements, generated diffuse support, and connected the concepts of resilience and support together. Two DEFRA officials acknowledged that they had never considered the tacit and symbolic role that the parliamentary system could play during crises but both enthusiastically endorsed the supposition that diffuse support had beneficial crisis management effects (interviews, UK Officials C, D). Asked whether or not the mere existence of the parliamentary system generates public support that makes the nation more resilient, one official replied, 'yes very much so although I have to say I have never considered it like that before' (interview, UK Official C) and a second official commented that, 'having a democratic framework must be important in that way. It must be and Parliament must obviously be a part of that' (interview, UK Official D). However, the same official raised a caveat which became a subsequent theme throughout other discussions of diffuse support, which was that large swathes of the general public are unaware of what the parliamentary system is, what it does, the principles underpinning it, and the distinction between executive and parliament in the United Kingdom.

No Welsh FMD interviewee provided any support for the 'systemic' diffuse support claims. However, the existence of a communication channel through parliaments for dissatisfaction in Scotland, according to Elaine Murray, was important because it restrained the emergence of, 'more extreme, more violent behaviour' which could create or worsen crises (interview, Elaine Murray), while Alex Fergusson argued that devolution, 'could soften the impact of any crisis affecting Scotland in which the Executive has control because people will feel less remote from decision making' (interview, Alex Fergusson). A SEERAD official, when asked whether the existence of the parliamentary system could be considered to be a resilience capability, stated:

The answer is that its got to be. Yes, to say we're in safe hands, that we've got our scrutineers, that our elected representatives are in the driving seat, or at least in some sort of position of influence. It's that which creates confidence. It's that which, alongside what has to be an effective operational reaction, stops the issue from getting worse and people reacting badly to it. (interview, SE Official A)

The Fuel Crisis

Two fuel protest respondents, both Welsh Assembly Members, provided support for the idea that the parliamentary system generated support which could add to the state's resilience (interviews, John Marek, John Griffiths). In both interviews, these AMs argued that the existence of the Assembly provided a symbol which reassured the public that democratic norms were still functioning despite any ongoing crisis. This reassurance, both AM's agreed, enhanced stability because it helped to 'maintain and manage the expectations of the public' (interview, John Marek). As far as Kenny MacAskill was concerned, stability was enhanced in Scotland, post-devolution, because diffuse support had been based upon, 'a feeling that you have a voice, that's democracy and that's what people can agree upon when it comes to supporting the Parliament. They may not like many things about it but they appreciate that we're not run by Westminster' (interview, Kenny MacAskill).

The English Exam Crisis

The English exam crisis interviewees were all generally positive about the existence of diffuse support. However, there were different interpretations of its effects. For example, Oliver Heald argued that the freedom of speech principle underpinning the UK representative system was particularly powerful in this sense:

In a democracy it's a very good thing if you have in times of crisis people in a position to speak up for you. This is the thing about freedom of speech, it's very important, even in cases where people have been in crises and I've taken up the case for them and we've lost. ... the existence of freedom of speech is a good thing and it's part of our system. The fact that people don't feel repressed, unable to have their say, unable to be represented, that feeling is a dreadful one. I was talking to someone yesterday who lived in the Soviet Union for a period and that was the sad and miserable fact of life there, it was bloody awful and you couldn't say anything about it and you were always worried and that's one of the good things about this country. You've got this freedom to really say what you think and you've got a right to do it and MPs are a really important part of that and it does make us more resilient. (interview, Oliver Heald)

Other interviewees raised the caveat first discussed by the DEFRA official relating to the general public's knowledge of the parliamentary system. The idea that the existence of the parliamentary system generated a tacit form of support from the general public was viewed as problematic. It was argued instead that the more specific principles and practices of the parliamentary system created a form of diffuse support amongst important opinion formers, most notably within the media (interviews, Paul Holmes, UK Officials A, B):

To the average person on the street, they often don't appreciate the difference between government and opposition and executive and parliament and all the rest of it but certainly opinion formers in the press and so on do more or less. People like that generally have faith in the system, so yes. (interview, Paul Holmes)

Two parliamentary officials also suggested that 'those in the know' understand and appreciate the parliamentary system, particularly its scrutiny functions, and this generates support 'amongst specialist groups that are concerned with the issues' rather than the general public (interviews, UK Official A, B). The stumbling block for the application of Easton's

concept was, according to one official, that there is no need for the general public to access or understand the parliamentary system. The majority of the population does not engage with politics because there is a high degree of satisfaction with economic and social standards. Diffuse support could certainly be linked to the electoral process, this official argued, but it was doubtful whether or not the general public were even aware of most other components of the parliamentary system (interview, UK Official A)

The Scottish Exam Crisis

All four Scottish exam crisis interviewees stated that the existence of the Scottish parliamentary system, or one component of that system, generated a beneficial form of diffuse support. Cathie Peattie, for example, used another crisis - the fire brigade strike of 2002 - to argue that the existence of a Scottish parliamentary system generates a supportive 'feeling' amongst civil society, rather than the general public, which can help avoid crises:

An example I would use is the fire services dispute. I didn't necessarily agree with it but I work quite closely with the FBU [Fire Brigade Union] and I know that the people that reacted in the Union felt that things got sorted out a lot quicker in Scotland and the exchanges were a lot clearer. Some of that has nothing to do with the Parliament and whether that's true or not is also debatable but I know that there is a feeling amongst a lot of unions that you can get parliamentary access, that you can access the power system, that they know who is involved, that you can get your voice heard. Things don't always go the way they want but there is a feeling out there that power is close to the people and a feeling out there that you can influence things here. That's very true and the Union said that if that dispute was simply about Scotland we could have sorted it all out a lot quicker. Part of the reason for that is because there is that feeling out there, not always amongst the general public but certainly amongst unions and other folk that know the system here. (interview, Cathie Peattie)

The three remaining Scottish interviewees focused on the existence of parliamentary scrutiny as a source of diffuse support (interviews, Marilyn Livingstone, Brian Monteith, SE Official E). For example, the SEED official, when asked if the mere existence of the parliamentary system was important to stability, replied:

Absolutely, that resonates with me completely. What I was saying about the legitimacy of the committee inquiry, the Minister standing up making a statement, that is a really important part of the whole thing. You need that forum, it does create legitimacy and from there, stability. (interview, SE Official E)

Brian Monteith also suggested that the ability of the representative system to generate forms of 'amendatory' accountability (Turpin 1989: 57) was important for the avoidance of crises and the maintenance of order:

Pre-universal franchise, the absence of proper parliamentary systems meant more riots and civil disturbances when things went wrong. We don't have that now and part of that is due to the development of parliaments. When government's screw up badly, people know that they can affect change at some point through the parliamentary system. That means stability and freedom from the kind of extremist reactions you would get in past times. (interview, Brian Monteith)

7.2 Diffuse Support: Overflow from Structure to Authorities?

Ambivalent reactions in England met the questions which raised the possibility of the parliamentary system attracting support which 'overflowed' to benefit authorities. However, interviewees from Wales and Scotland connected diffuse support to policy compliance. Elaine Murray, for example, argued that the existence of post-crisis scrutiny ensures that policies will be complied with in the heat of a crisis (interview, Elaine Murray). Alex Fergusson reiterated his argument that diffuse support was generated by reducing the proximity between decision makers and those affected during the FMD epidemic. This meant that existence of the Scottish Parliament created more compliance than would be the case pre-devolution because it shortened the distance between disease control decisions and farmers:

Had this [cull] policy been imposed from Westminster then I think there would have been a far greater outcry but it was the fact that it was a policy designed in Scotland for Scotland albeit by a still very young institution, that gave it the level of acceptance that was given. (interview, Alex Fergusson)

Another interviewee, a WAG official, described a circle where the position of the public and the WAG rotated. Most of the time, and particularly during crises, the WAG would be at the top of the circle imposing policy downwards. However, this official argued that it was important that the people felt that they came to the top of the circle to exercise power over the WAG. The electoral process allows the positions of power to move and this temporary shift, according to this official, is one reason why the WAG can impose authoritative policies during crisis episodes (interview, WAG Official A). Although the electoral process must actively function to provide this legitimacy, it is likely to remain dormant during most crises. This was, therefore, an example of an inert representative process generating diffuse support, which ‘overflows’ to the benefit of crisis management authorities. To an extent, this claim was corroborated in the cathartic function findings by those respondents that associated the electoral process with policy acquiescence. Scottish officials also supported this theoretical proposition. The SEED official involved in the Scottish exam crisis emphatically supported the idea that the existence of a parliamentary system helped with the implementation of crisis management policies:

What you decide needs to have parliamentary authority, “that has been decided, that is the way forward, that is the way the law will be”. It’s much harder for people to knock things or throw stones at things then. Policy has a solidity once it has been through the Parliament because it has been endorsed either as a policy statement or even more strongly as legislation. Doesn’t mean people will necessarily like it or even agree with it but there is a kind of attitude where people knuckle down and get on with it because the thing’s went through a legitimate process. (interview, SE Official E)

Finally, two members of the Scottish Executive’s Contingencies Division stated that the existence of a Scottish parliamentary system generated confidence in response structures, respect for ‘front line’ responders and an acceptance of response decisions:

The parliamentary system we have now means that people have confidence in our structures and people generally believe, for example, in the fairness of the police

service which partly comes down to our democratic culture and that, if you like, overall context is helpful not only in an abstract way but also for generating respect in society and respect for those of us who have to respond to emergencies. (interview. SE Official D)

That's part of the benefits and purposes of parliamentary democracy, that people feel, although it doesn't work perfectly all the time, that they have a certain number of times during an emergency, particularly a longer running one, the opportunity to influence ministers and the people who are making decisions through their elected members. I think in Scotland in general people are seeing and accepting that the Scottish Parliament is much more integrated with civil society than Westminster ever was or even is and if people are able to raise questions and the committee system is vibrant and powerful certainly during an emergency but particularly after an emergency and people who are affected by something feel they are able to get their views across to those who have made decisions and are going to be making decisions in the future about learning lessons for future crises I think, not just with emergencies but with many other policy areas, parliamentary democracy has all the advantages over a dictatorship. Inevitably for those making decisions it can be frustrating at times, but that's part and parcel of a democracy and I do think it works fairly well and we do look closely when the Scottish Parliament releases a report, we will pore over its recommendations and advise ministers to agree or disagree with a particular line and all of that helps us when it comes to a crisis because people feel that they can accept what we do because they feel that they can use the Parliament to get changes made after the event, so yeah, I'm a great fan of parliamentary democracy. (interview, Scottish Executive Official C)

7.3 Associated Output Functions and Specific Support

Diffuse support does seem to 'spill-over' to the benefit of crisis management authorities. However, we must be careful not to over-emphasise the importance of this spill over. A parliamentary system which creates diffuse support certainly helps rather than hinders authorities operating within it, but many of the previous sections already contain examples of associated output functions generating specific support for crisis management authorities. In total, the number of interviewees who stated that a specific parliamentary function created support for authorities far outweighs the number who substantiated the theory of diffuse support overflow. In particular, the sections which focused on symbolic output, constituency roles and scrutiny functions analysed the ways in which parliamentary functions can affect 'legitimacy fluctuations' by influencing perceptions about the behaviour of authorities. Rituals of solidarity and assurance, for example, are directly related to the generation of

support. Framing and counter-framing sections highlighted how parliamentary procedures can be used in political attempts to sway public opinion about the performance and behaviour of authorities. Scrutiny mechanisms can also be a factor affecting fluctuations in support. They have the potential to erode support because of their partisan nature but, because they symbolise or operationalise positive democratic values, they can also enhance legitimacy. Constituency services can also generate specific support. Errand running, lightning rod and mobilisation of support roles were all believed to benefit UK, Welsh and Scottish crisis responses in this regard. Whether or not cathartic functions can be conceived of as generators of support is open to debate, but the release of emotion through representative processes may stop specific support for authorities dropping to critically low levels.

7.4 Upward 'Flows' of Support

One final group of contributions are extremely pertinent to this discussion. It was suggested in chapter three, after a review of a number of research publications, that the actions of political institutions during crises could result in greater support for the political regime as a whole (Easton 1965; Loewenberg 1971; Jewell and Patterson 1973; Mezey 1979). Evidence of what Easton described as support 'spill over' (1965: 344), where support generated by the actions of authorities enhances diffuse support in the wider political regime, was found in England, Wales and Scotland. The main thrust of the thinking behind the analytical framework suggested that a legitimate state structure can provide benefits for the effective management of crises. However, the findings outlined below also show that effective crisis management can enhance positive sentiments about larger political structures.

When asked questions about diffuse support and resilience, eight English interviewees (officials and MPs) provided evidence which suggested that the constituency roles generate

support during crises, which enhances regime stability (interviews, Oliver Heald, Owen Paterson, Andrew Miller, Mark Todd, Lembit Opik, UK Officials, C, D, G). These interviewees stressed that the active functioning of constituency communication channels was important because it improved support for the political system as a whole. For example, it has already been noted how Oliver Heald believed that his championing of individual cases generated local support for him and for Parliament. Mr Heald also maintained that:

People value their own MP and their role as a constituency MP, taking up the cudgels for them, attacking the government, whatever party they are in, on behalf of the constituent and they value that role hugely and they like MPs on that, they think MPs are good at that and their own MP is good and so on and that helps support but of course when it comes to the class of government or Parliament or MPs generally they are much less keen, government is seen as a machine and Whitehall very remote whereas their local MP is somebody they know and by and large like. (interview, Oliver Heald)

Owen Paterson was also certain that his activities generated support and, through this, resilience:

Resilience? Oh yeah, yeah, the main impact was in the most horrific constituency cases. These people did have someone, and they all learnt that they could ring me at any time, they had my mobile number and they could ring me at any time and the civil servants in the ministry knew that I wouldn't go away. I am quite confident that there were certain things that would not have been resolved if it had been left to it. (interview, Owen Paterson)

The idea that constituency duties facilitate support is not novel. Instead, the findings here substantiate the original claims of Norton and Wood (1993), who were correct to state that the ability of MPs to respond to constituency demands is a source of support for the political system:

Arguably a much more important consequence in the context of the British political system is that of *regime support*, i.e., of channelling popular consent toward those who make policy and indicating to policy makers when consent has been withheld ... An important contributor to this role, given a constituency-

based electoral system, is the attention paid by Members of Parliament to the more specific needs of their constituents. (Norton and Wood 1993: 3)

Evidence of specific support flowing 'upwards' was presented repeatedly by interviewees in Wales and Scotland. Twelve interviewees stated that the Welsh and Scottish Executive's management of the case study crises, and the role that each representative assembly played, improved the legitimacy of the devolved institutions and the level of public support for devolution generally. For example, the fact that the WAG and the Assembly received praise from the FMD inquiries underscored the legitimacy of the devolution settlement and engendered public confidence in the new institutions. Asked whether or not the FMD epidemic helped strengthen public confidence in the devolution settlement, a majority of interviewees felt that it had:

Yeah, absolutely it [FMD] did have a positive effect and you only have to look at how easily we managed to secure the animal health and welfare powers from Westminster. ... Undoubtedly, I think the Assembly's reputation was enhanced by our being able to deal with a major crisis and we were less than two years old as an organisation. (interview, WAG Official C)

The same responses were echoed in Scotland across all the case studies. MSPs and officials involved in the FMD response added further proof to the claim that these crises enhanced the legitimacy of the Scottish devolution settlement:

I think certainly we got an awful lot of credit for it and I think devolution was part of the reason for that. I think that we felt more confident post-1999, I think we knew that agriculture was devolved and animal health and welfare was devolved, therefore, I think probably more so than pre-devolution, we were confident to take decisions because they were our decisions to take. Pre-devolution we might have been thinking, "well you know I wonder should we do this? Is this going to be different from the rest of the GB?" And in all these things DEFRA had the final say and we might find they would give us something that wasn't right for Scotland but we were in Scotland, we were devolved and we said "right, lets go for it". The Minister, that was a big feather in his cap. It showed he could handle a major crisis. That raised his stock amongst his colleagues and he seemed to take a lot of confidence and he went on and was quite authoritative. You saw that in his performance during avian influenza. So

no losers in a Scottish sense in terms of legitimacy or credibility. (interview, Scottish Executive Official B)

Kenny MacAskill argued that the Parliament gained legitimacy during the fuel crisis because it established itself as a 'lightening rod' for those with a public grievance:

I think you'll look back and say it was one of the first things that embedded the Parliament, added to it, created this place where, if you have a grievance in Scotland that's where you go. It did add to the legitimacy of the new Parliament because it was the first big test from an organised protest. (interview, Kenny MacAskill)

The exam crisis interviewees all thought that the role that the Scottish Parliament played post-crisis enhanced its reputation:

We moved from a referendum where people wanted a Scottish Parliament to complaining that it was costing a lot of money, that it was all a waste of time to people arguing that the Parliament should have more powers because Parliament in general has been able to deal with some of those things in a very visible manner and maybe politicians have been able to come out on their own and get away from the apple pie debates and actually manage to change things and I think that's part of the Parliament growing up and it's still got a lot of growing up to do yet. I think those things were important for how people perceived the Parliament and what we do. (interview, Cathie Peattie)

One member of the Scottish Executive's Contingencies Division succinctly summarised the effects of all three crises in terms of legitimacy and public perception:

It [devolution] certainly didn't hinder the management of those emergencies and along with lots of other things helped to frame the rationale for a Scottish Parliament, that you can do things differently, that there's well defined constituencies within Scotland and part of the rationale for devolution is that decision making is closer to the front line. I'm sure that, along with lots of other things, it helped to build up a picture in the public mind that devolution works. (interview, SE Official C)

Diffuse and Specific Support: Summary

The existence of a tacitly approved parliamentary system which generates diffuse support can be considered to be a resilience capability. The parliamentary frameworks of the UK, because they enjoy diffuse support and a tacit 'reservoir of goodwill' (Easton 1965: 249), are believed to provide a stable context within which crises can be contained, moderated and, perhaps, even avoided. It is also clear that specific support, generated by the actions of crisis management authorities and parliamentarians during crises, can 'flow upwards' to enhance positive perceptions about parliamentary systems. The ability of English, Scottish and Welsh institutions to cope with the challenges of these crises undoubtedly created a 'spill over' of support which benefited specific authorities *and* the larger political system.

The scepticism of several interviewees about the ability of the parliamentary system to generate diffuse support because of ignorance about the parliamentary system deserves further comment. To an extent, these respondents have failed to fully understand the concept of diffuse support, which does not really require anything other than the most rudimentary understanding of politics in order to be generated. These contributions are interesting, however, because they indicate that the more specific components of parliamentary systems (excluding elections) might struggle to attract diffuse support because growing numbers of the public do not even have a rudimentary awareness of their existence. While everyone can agree that elections 'are a good thing', it may now be impossible to argue, for example, that the doctrine of ministerial responsibility generates diffuse support simply because awareness of that convention's existence is not diffuse. For these lesser known components of the parliamentary system, support may only exist amongst a concentrated section of the nation and amongst 'opinion formers' who then communicate this approval outwards to a larger section of the public. Certainly, the idea that the lesser known components of the parliamentary system do not generate diffuse support appears to be compatible with other

political science research which documents growing levels of ignorance to and apathy about formal politics (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980; Park 2000; Henn *et al.* 2005; Thomas *et al.* 2006). Regardless of this nuance, it still remains possible to argue that the parliamentary systems as a whole generate diffuse support. Even if a majority of the population are unaware of the specific components of the parliamentary system, the fact is that the vaguest conception of liberal democracy is enough to generate a form of tacit approval. Thus, although the specific components do not generate diffuse support, the 'big picture' of liberal democracy - even in its haziest form - is approved tacitly by the majority of the population. The principal indicator of this, moreover, is the absence of crises where the populace seek to change the structures of the state.

Throughout the previous sections it has been repeatedly claimed that these parliaments are important because they can affect fluctuations in the legitimacy of specific authorities. However, what is clear is that support for authorities cannot be considered to result solely from the functioning and output of parliamentary processes. The existence of an approved parliamentary system is also important in this regard. Support for authorities created by a representative system must be conceived as the result of a compound of latent and explicit functions generated by the mere existence and the operations of parliament.

Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis was born out of two simple and interrelated claims; that representative institutions could tell us something about crisis management, and that crisis episodes could generate insights into the roles of representative assemblies. The argument of the thesis grew in complexity between chapters one to three as these two claims were used to create an analytical framework which connected the concept of representation to the analysis of crises and presented a number of hypotheses about macro, meso and micro representative functions to crisis managers. These functions, and the hypotheses which connected them to the management of crises, formed the spine of the framework and structured the empirical chapters which followed (see chapter three, p, 117-119, for a summary of the framework's main components). The hypotheses were then examined in detail throughout chapters five to seven, resulting in nuanced conclusions about the involvement of the UK and Scottish parliaments and the Welsh Assembly in four contemporary crises. The process of establishing conceptual links between the study of representative institutions and crisis management, and the examination of the practical involvement of British representative assemblies thereafter, both generated a number of potential lessons for parliamentary scholars and crisis analysts. The conclusion below, however, returns to the two original claims which began the thesis in order to summarise the most important lessons to emerge from the analytical framework and its application to the case studies. The sections below are therefore presented in two sections. First, a number of 'scholarly' lessons about the study of representation and crises are presented, which have been generated through the use of representative and crisis perspectives in tandem within one inquiry. Second, specific empirical lessons relating to the importance of systemic, institutional and individual representative functions are summarised.

Scholarly Lessons: The Connections between Crises and Representation

The thesis's analytical framework should not be seen merely as a one-dimensional construct, designed solely to analyse the practical involvement of representative institutions during the management of crises. The framework has value in its own right because its constitutive elements generate lessons about the study of representative institutions and crises –lessons which have been enhanced by the empirical analysis undertaken within the framework. The most important of these lessons are summarised below before the empirical lessons are turned to.

The first and most obvious of the academic lessons is that the successful use of parliamentary and crisis management perspectives in tandem proves that legislature and crisis studies are not worlds apart- they are similar in certain crucial respects. Underneath this significant finding, more detailed lessons can be discerned. The specific connections linking the two fields of study together, upon which the framework has been built, draw attention to a series of important arguments which are summarised below.

A key argument supported in this thesis is that *political perspectives are crucial to understanding crisis episodes and many non-executive, non-bureaucratic actors can shape contemporary crisis responses*. Such claims are neither novel nor exclusive to this thesis; they can be found within a number of literatures, which act as an antidote to technocratic views of crisis management (tHart 1993: 41; Quarantelli 1998: 274; Albaek 2001: 466; tHart *et al.* 2001: 181-182; McConnell and Stark 2002: 664; Boin *et al.* 2005: 47). The conceptual and empirical chapters of this project both clearly reinforce those arguments – there is little doubt that crisis management can be extremely political and polycentric in terms of the actors involved. The real contribution of the conceptual elements of this thesis, however, can be seen in the development of the 'political' and 'polycentric' argument in one

specific (new) direction i.e. the claim that *because representation is important to politics and politics to crisis management, representative institutions should be considered in analyses of crisis episodes*. As perspectives on crises expand and crisis management literatures develop, political science approaches can be expected to be used with more regularity by crisis analysts. These approaches are likely to reflect those perspectives that are currently *de rigueur* within political science – perspectives which tend to display ‘post-parliamentary’ norms and values. What this thesis suggests to crisis analysts is that representation is also a valuable conceptual lens, capable of generating insights into the politics *and* operations of a crisis response. Representation, therefore, is a useful compliment to the policy-orientated and institutional approaches that are beginning to emerge in crisis analysis. *Making this case in greater detail is relatively straightforward, largely because the same functions that make representation relevant to political life tend to be those that are most relevant to the management of crises.*

The legitimisation function, for example, has been the cornerstone of normative and empirical arguments about the continuing relevance of representative institutions within modern polities (Packenham 1990: 86; Beetham 1992: 41; Judge 1993: 2; Flinders 2002a: 38). Conversely, the increasing tendency of certain crisis analysts to view legitimacy as a worthwhile conceptual tool indicates that it can be used to connect the two fields of study together. This is another important lesson – *legitimacy is a powerful bridging concept through which parliamentary and political science perspectives can be related to crisis analysis*. This thesis has shown that representative institutions can be used as a lens through which the profound consequences of the legitimacy-crisis management relationship can be explored. For those with an interest in legitimacy during crises, parliamentary and representation research offers a rich vein of supportive literature, much of which has already examined many of the issues that crisis scholars are just beginning to come to terms with.

For a discipline in its infancy, these perspectives offer a number of specific advantages over other 'post-parliamentary' political approaches.

One of the most significant advantages shown by this thesis is that, unlike many other 'post-parliamentary' perspectives, *representation can be used to examine legitimacy in micro, meso and macro terms simultaneously*, which has been a goal of certain crisis scholars for some time (see for example, Hansen and Stern 2001: 179). Thus at the macro level, the works of Easton, Beetham and Judge, for example, when applied to crisis management, generated insights about the relationship between legitimacy, systemic stability and political resilience. At the institutional and individual level, *the concepts of 'specific support' and 'legitimacy dynamics', developed from a range of political science literatures, have provided insights into the politics of crisis management*. The framework created from these concepts should prove particularly useful for crisis scholars, who have tended to engage in discussions of legitimacy dynamics without properly defining what they mean by the term (see for example, 'Hart and Boin 2001: 31; Boin 2004: 167). The concepts of 'specific support', the 'definable range' of acceptable behaviour, and the notion of fluctuating public perceptions provide a straightforward, but much needed, explanation of what is meant by the term 'legitimacy dynamics' in relation to crisis. Moreover, this basic framework is amenable to analyses of non-executive bodies, such as representative institutions, which may be important to crisis resolution, not because they are key crisis management authorities but because they can affect the legitimacy (and therefore performance) of such authorities.

Although the legitimisation function is clearly an important conceptual thread throughout this thesis, it is by no means the only function justifying the examination of representative institutions in relation to crisis analysis. *Legitimation must be understood as a thread of a larger fabric of relevant representative functions; a fabric which only becomes fully*

apparent when a researcher looks beyond the legislative function as a unit of analysis. The need to look beyond this function is a fundamental lesson, which is relevant to both fields of study. Fresh insights into representative institutions can be generated if researchers are prepared to examine representative functions in innovative ways and in novel contexts. The starting point for this exercise is the realisation that British representative institutions are, at best, policy influencers rather than policymakers. Certain parliamentary scholars already provide a supportive framework for this exercise; they have already shown how a range of representative functions, not immediately apparent to the casual observer nor connected to authoritative policymaking, can have important political consequences (Wahlke *et al.* 1962; Eulau and Hinckley 1966; Patterson and Wahlke 1972; Jewell and Patterson 1973; Norton 1990; Pakenham 1990; Judge 1993; Marsh *et al.* 2001). Functions such as those outlined below not only indicate the areas where representative institutions will affect the management of future crises; they also provide a conceptual pathway towards addressing larger questions about the continuing relevance of representation in the twenty-first century. These larger questions, however, can only be addressed if contemporary parliamentary scholars are prepared to broaden out their conceptualisations of parliamentary functions in the way that Pakenham *et al.* first advocated. This is not a novel lesson; certain scholars, such as Norton and Judge for example, have already shown the analytical value to be gained from recalibrating parliamentary analysis in these terms. This thesis, however, merely reinforces and re-emphasises the benefits of such perspectives.

The search for representative functions ‘beyond policymaking’ led to the realisation that parliamentary and certain crisis management scholars can be observed ‘talking the same language’. Common conceptual ground here relates to a number of functions, again sited at the macro, meso and micro levels of analysis, which cannot be grouped together under any discrete rubric yet appear, *a priori*, to connect representative institutions to crisis

management in a logical manner. In this regard, themes relating to structure and agency effects at the macro (systemic) level; catharsis, conflict management, 'issue escape', accountability and lesson learning at the meso (institutional) level; and, constituency and communicatory roles at the micro (individual) level unite both fields of study.

The points of connection which are used to build the analytical framework indicate the linkages between parliamentary and crisis scholars; shared interests that might profitably be built upon and connected further for the benefit of both disciplines. Parliamentary and political science research can help crisis analysts gain insights into legitimacy, political conflict, symbolic communication and systemic stability. Legislative study, however, is well trodden ground, yet developing connections between the two disciplines may also benefit scholars of legislatures because crisis management represents a largely unploughed field of study, which might help to expand and invigorate parliamentary and representative research. For example, the empirical summaries below point to a number of parliamentary functions that become invigorated, transformed or modified in some manner during crises (see for example, constituency roles and scrutiny functions below). Parliamentary scholars are obviously familiar with these functions but they are less likely to have studied their nature during crises. On a conceptual level, therefore, the main linkages and claims which underpin this thesis's analytical framework deserve to be explored further. In particular, future research might wish to explore the representation, legitimacy, crisis management relationship in finer detail because of the importance that each field places on legitimacy. This thesis has contended that a strong conceptual connection exists in this area but more theoretical work is required, particularly at the macro-level, to define the many contours of the relationship.

The conceptual elements of this thesis show clearly that the same functions that make

representative institutions of importance to politics are also those that make them of importance to crisis management. However, the empirical dimensions of the thesis indicate that some functions were more important than others during the management of the four crises concerning this thesis.

Empirical Lessons: the most Important Representative Functions

The principal lesson to emerge from the empirical sections of the thesis is that *British representative institutions have the capacity to affect the management of contemporary crises*. From the seven representative functions that constitute the analytical framework, only one - deliberation as a conflict management tool - can be considered negligible to the management of these crises. However, it is essential that evidence of parliamentary *involvement* is not translated into inferences about parliamentary *importance* in all of the hypothesised areas. Although it is clear that all three representative assemblies were involved in the management of these crises in some way, not all of the specific hypothetical proposals generated enough inter-institutional and inter-case evidence to be deemed significant. However, *three representative functions - constituency roles, symbolic outputs and scrutiny functions - did produce enough evidence to be defined as important*. It remains difficult to classify exactly the relative value of the remaining functions but it is clear that they are also relevant to the management of crises. What is beyond doubt, however, is that *when the findings are considered as a whole, representative institutions cannot be dismissed as inconsequential to the politics or the management of these crises*.

Throughout this thesis criticisms have been made about numerous crisis management scholars who make reference to parliaments, yet who have failed to investigate their role further. Before this thesis, representative institutions were included in the map of crisis management but only discussed in passing, as if they were a mundane part of the general

landscape of a crisis unworthy of attention. This thesis has established that representative institutions deserve to be given more detailed attention and added to the growing list of non-executive organisations capable of affecting the management of crises. The failure of crisis scholars to consider parliaments in any great detail has led to certain assumptions, such as the generally held view that parliaments will be involved in post-crisis learning and accountability processes, being accepted at 'face value'. The empirical sections of this thesis are relevant to crisis analysts because they provide 'real world' evidence about actual parliamentary involvement in crisis episodes; evidence which can be juxtaposed against the incidental references that are currently littered across various works. The summaries below might usefully be reviewed carefully by crisis scholars because they reinforce some of their assumptions, flatly challenge others and, on the whole, demand that representative institutions receive more careful analytical attention in the examination of future crises.

The analysis of parliamentary activity during crises has highlighted some novel empirical insights about representative functions; insights which have developed because 'taken for granted' functions have been examined during periods of abnormality. For example, crisis episodes can allow a researcher to: observe the transformation and invigoration of constituency roles; discover new functions, such as crisis-orientated symbolic outputs; examine a doctrine of responsibility usually described as 'mythical' or inverted' having a powerful influence of over civil servants; establish that representative assemblies can influence bureaucratic decision making; and, take steps towards the empirical verification of the most nebulous of representative concepts – diffuse support. The empirical sections of the thesis therefore show how scholars like Packerham were correct to argue that new contexts would lead to novel findings. The most important of these findings are summarised below.

Constituency Roles

Representatives working within their communities can be a valuable asset in terms of the implementation of crisis management policy. Representatives can improve communications between crisis managers and affected constituents (errand running and feedback functions); mobilise support for authorities in their communities; and, can provide a cathartic outlet for the expression of emotions locally (lightening rod functions). Errand running and feedback roles, in particular, validate the decision to examine in tandem crisis management and parliamentary literatures and to pursue research in this area. The discovery that elected representatives can be beneficial to 'front line' operational communications, particularly when a crisis response is required across a large geographical area, is an important lesson, which deserves acknowledgement amongst mainstream crisis management scholars and contingencies practitioners. The assumption that elected representatives are inconsequential to the operations of a crisis response has been challenged. Conversely, the finding that those representatives who perform errand running and feedback functions can temporarily shift in status - moving from 'outsiders' to 'insiders' in relation to state crisis managers - shows how novel findings about representative functions can emerge from crisis analysis. However, the significance of these roles in a crisis response will depend on the unique nature of the crisis itself and because of this variance; elected representatives cannot be considered to be essential crisis responders. Nevertheless, the importance of constituency orientated parliamentarians and the fact that crisis managers are beginning to recognise that 'often the most important people for solving the problem over the short and long term are from the community itself' and that in this regard 'there is a clear role for elected representatives' (interview, SE Official D), means that constituency roles will become more important to future crisis management efforts. The increasing likelihood of representatives becoming involved in the 'front line' suggests that this is a priority issue in terms of further research. In particular, it would be beneficial to match particular constituency roles to different types

of crisis response so that state contingency plans may be adapted accordingly.

Symbolic Outputs

The role of all three representative institutions in the production and communication of symbolic outputs highlights their practical involvement in the politics of crisis management. By acting as one influence amongst many that affected public perceptions during these crises, each representative assembly influenced the legitimacy of individual authorities. For example, parliamentary framing was a factor which, *inter alia*, contributed to the escalation of both exam crises. In those cases, parliamentarians were an important element in a collective framing process that exaggerated the scale and severity of the problems within each assessment system. Perceptions of unacceptable policy failure and political culpability emerged in each case when the crisis narrative began to be constructed by coalitions of self interested groups outside of government. Thus representative assemblies can be seen as one factor capable of translating policy failures into political crises. However, the variability of this function cannot be over-emphasised. While the exam crises show the role that representative assemblies can play, other examples, particularly the Foot and Mouth epidemic at the UK level, highlight the failure of the assemblies to influence public perceptions. The significance of the representative assembly and its members, therefore, appears to be contingent on the unique discourse coalitions and framing dynamics which emerge during a particular crisis episode. Rituals of solidarity and reassurance are also important. During the acute stage of certain crises, the symbolism encapsulated within parliamentary rituals can become meaningful. Even if concrete executive action does not follow, the symbolism involved in being seen publicly to 'input' demands into the political system and communicate cross-party support for crisis managers can be significant in terms of improving perceptions of crisis management behaviour.

The tentative indications within crisis literature that parliaments were likely producers of symbolic outputs have therefore been confirmed; they should now be pursued further by crisis analysts interested in the linkages between political communication, legitimacy dynamics and the performance of crisis management activities. The findings also indicate how crisis management perspectives can provide insights into representative institutions and open up new research avenues for investigation. The symbolic outputs sections also show, once again, how the application of a crisis management lens can lead to interesting insights about the utility of certain parliamentary functions. Ritualised parliamentary proceedings, for example, often attract criticism. In normative arguments about the shape and character of a modern polity, the rituals of Westminster are often cited as illustrations of the ineffectual and unnecessary characteristics of a legislature, which should be avoided (see, for example, Scottish Constitutional Convention 1995: 9). The examination of rituals through the lens of crisis management, however, shows how parliamentary processes that have become caricatured, taken for granted and even vilified for a lack of utility, can in fact have important consequences.

These practical findings can be built upon and expanded by parliamentary and crisis scholars because they are rooted in the concepts of legitimacy and legitimation, which is common ground for both sets of scholars. First, the circumstances which empower representative institutions should be explored in greater detail. Discourse coalitions and framing dynamics during crises are subtle and complex and deserve greater analysis in their own right. For representative assemblies and individuals to shape perceptions held by the general public they must rely upon amplification through the mass media, which may only take place if the interests of both parties are served by engaging in framing efforts. On those occasions when coalitions of self interest do form between the two groups, representative institutions become one important part of the political dynamics of a crisis but what are the environmental

variables that lead to these coalitions in some crises but not in others? More research is required in this area to determine precisely what circumstances lead to the empowerment of assemblies and representatives. Second, the extent to which symbolic outputs affect public perceptions requires further research. The evidence from this thesis indicates that interested publics, usually those who are directly affected by a crisis, are likely to engage with, and then have their perceptions influenced by, elected representatives. Future investigations should test this claim by examining the extent to which the general public and different stakeholder groups are influenced by symbolic outputs during crises. Indeed, this strategy could be used to explore many of the claims to emerge from this thesis because the evidence here only relates to elite perceptions. It would be beneficial to expand the interviewee groups and to test the claims of elites against other important crisis management stakeholders.

Scrutiny Functions

Incidental references in crisis management literature led to the expectation that parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms would play a significant role in the post-crisis periods of each case study due to their ability to affect lesson learning and blaming dynamics. What is particularly interesting about the findings in relation to scrutiny functions is that they generated a series of unexpected findings relating to meso and macro levels of analysis. For example, in the majority of cases these representative institutions played minor roles in lesson learning, with the only exception being the Scottish Parliament's influence over the SQA Act. Outside of that example, only small-scale examples emerged about lesson learning influence. A limited amount of data relating to committees, for example, showed they have the ability to contribute to policy learning via horizon scanning and errand running/feedback functions, but these contributions related to earlier crisis management stages. This thesis provides a warning to crisis management scholars that parliamentary

scrutiny should not be taken for granted; it cannot always be neatly described as a post-crisis lesson learning input. Crisis scholars, therefore, are advised to move beyond incidental references and intuitive assumptions about parliamentary accountability if they wish to understand properly post-crisis recovery periods.

The importance of scrutiny mechanisms in these cases only became apparent when the analytical scope was broadened out to focus less on specific policy reforms and more on the larger context within which lesson learning takes place. The evidence from this analysis suggests that the existence of forms of parliamentary scrutiny can have important effects, which are often latent but nevertheless significant to the 'bigger picture' of policy change. The threat of parliamentary oversight, even if parliamentary procedures remain inactive, for example, is one impetus that helps to ensure that bureaucratic lesson learning is ongoing. More importantly, the evidence also indicates that the doctrine of ministerial responsibility is imbued in the thinking of crisis managers throughout the United Kingdom. This is a significant and again unexpected finding that should be of interest to those who have already made claims about the interface between structures of governance and bureaucratic thought and action (Judge 1993; 'tHart 1994; Stern 1997; Rhodes 2000; Marsh *et al.* 2001). Many of the interviewees in this thesis substantiated the validity of those claims with empirical evidence and developed them further by pointing to one specific structural element – the doctrine of ministerial accountability – that influences crisis induced policy deliberations. What is also significant about this finding is its applicability to the mainstream of crisis management and political science. The doctrine's effects cannot be classified merely as one minor input affecting post-crisis lesson learning. Instead, the evidence indicates that the doctrine is capable of casting a very long shadow over many different types of decision throughout the stages of a crisis. Indeed, if the doctrine conditions senior civil servants in such a way that policy deliberations are affected during a crisis, there is nothing to suggest

that many other forms of 'normal' policymaking have not also been affected in this way.

The evidence from this thesis might usefully be added therefore to the empirical work of Marsh *et al.* (2001) and expanded into detailed inquiries about other specific policy spheres. If the doctrine of ministerial responsibility is affecting the way in which civil service elites think and act it is worthy of more detailed academic scrutiny.

The findings relating to post-crisis politics were less surprising. Parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms, like symbolic outputs, can be used to examine the ebb and flow of specific legitimacy dynamics during this stage, which means that they can provide a useful lens for examining post-event politics. Visible attachment to parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms during crises can highlight the legitimate status of crisis leaders, reduce the potential for delegitimising criticisms and emphasise the democratic appropriateness of their behaviour. In this sense, being seen to 'give parliament its place', and the public use of parliamentary accountability rhetoric, can improve public perceptions of crisis managers. Parliamentary scrutiny can also act as a 'brake' on the legitimacy problems that authorities may experience as the result of a crisis. In the case of the English exam crisis, for example, a positive select committee report helped slow down this critical process, allowing crisis managers within the DfES to regain their equilibrium. However, the relationship between parliamentary scrutiny and authorities can also have negative effects - as the blaming of MAFF in Wales and the Scottish exam crisis indicate. Once again, therefore, the argument posited in relation to symbolic outputs, that parliaments become important through a (highly variable) ability to affect evaluations of specific authorities, was reinforced.

Issue Escape

The Foot and Mouth epidemic and the Scottish exam crisis witnessed the 'escape' of issues

from the full control of the UK, Welsh and Scottish executives. Networks comprising new decision making 'spheres of influence' emerged during those crises, either because state crisis managers had temporarily lost control of the situation or because they were forced to engage actively with new actors as contingencies materialised. When issues escaped, all three of the representative assemblies influenced, to varying degrees, crisis management decision making. Because they became focal points for lobbying during the FMD crisis, the assemblies affected MAFF, WAG and SEERAD decision making, either through affecting the larger policy 'climate' or by channelling specific concerns directly into small-scale policy deliberations. In Scotland, the exam crisis, for a number of reasons, spiralled out of the Scottish Executive's control, which meant that the Scottish Parliament was in a stronger position to influence the post-crisis policy debate and the specifics of the SQA Act. A number of caveats must be juxtaposed against this finding. First, the parliaments were only one influence amongst many actors in a network. Second, the type of influence that the parliaments exerted was extremely variable, ranging from: small scale influence exerted over several months (FMD: Scotland and Wales); a short, sharp punctuation of authority which was never repeated (FMD England); a significant influence over legislation (Scottish exams); to the full counter-factual - issue escape with no attendant increase in parliamentary influence (English exams/fuel protests). Fourth, it still remains difficult to identify all the variables that lead to an increase in parliamentary influence during a crisis. However, in each case where parliamentary involvement was found, the level of uncertainty caused by the crisis was significantly high.

These caveats show the difficulties involved in claiming that there is one dominant type or style of crisis policy. It is the uncertainty levels created by each unique crisis, and the contingencies that emerge thereafter, which dictate whether crisis responses have 'policy network' or 'policy community' characteristics and, subsequently, whether representative

assemblies will influence decision making. These findings, therefore, have implications for public policy and crisis management researchers who propose one-dimensional conceptions of policy making. Those with an interest in British public policy generally should be aware that insular policy communities are unlikely to remain cloistered during crises - contingent, politicised networks are likely to develop. Within crisis networks, representative assemblies are far from redundant in terms of policy influence. Should a crisis trigger an issue's escape, the ability of a representative assembly to channel interest group concerns should be examined. Similarly, the long standing view found in the crisis literature, that in times of crisis decision making influence becomes exclusive to a small group of crisis leaders, is also challenged here. In this regard, the findings above merely re-emphasise the 'political' and 'polycentric' argument which underpins the conceptual elements of the thesis. What is novel, however, is the finding that representatives and their assemblies should now be added to the growing list of actors who can be a factor in crisis management decision making. Practitioners would be advised to be aware that decision making during many types of crisis is unlikely to remain exclusive as uncertainty can mean a loss of executive decision making grip; either voluntarily or involuntarily. While a small group of decision makers can be maintained during a crisis, the number of 'spheres of influence' over policy deliberations is likely to grow exponentially. Crisis managers should prepare for these changes.

The Cathartic Function

Representatives and representative assemblies do perform cathartic functions which appear to be relevant to the management of contemporary crises. Lightning rod functions at a local level have the capacity to encourage policy acquiescence and assist in post-crisis termination; committee inquiries that are prepared to move meetings around the regions can play a sanitising function; and, the existence of a representative safety valve can play a role in crisis mitigation. However, the cathartic findings remain tentative, particularly in relation

to the institutional level. In this regard, the validity of the cathartic hypotheses are strengthened rather than confirmed. A potentially important parliamentary capacity is revealed but without enough inter-case, inter-institutional evidence to make definitive inferences about the effects that it can have in relation to crisis management. This aspect of the analytical framework, perhaps more than any other, might profitably be pursued because the strength of the evidence gathered here does not match the strength of the logic underpinning the cathartic claims. In particular, it would be beneficial to interview those individuals that have been severely affected by crises or pre-crisis dynamics in order to ascertain whether or not cathartic functions were meaningful to them.

Diffuse Support

Representative systems and structures that generate 'diffuse support' and regime legitimacy are relevant to crisis management. It can be claimed that the legitimacy of parliamentary democracy enhances 'UK resilience' by generating a tacit 'reservoir of goodwill' and, to a lesser extent, facilitates the acceptance of contingent policy. This finding does not challenge or reinforce any crisis management assumptions. Instead it opens up a new research avenue for crisis scholars because, despite analysing many structure and agency features, they have never considered the effects that regime legitimacy and diffuse support can have for the management of crises. Parliamentary scholars are likely to be familiar with the argument that regime legitimacy, derived from representative structures, can facilitate stability and acquiescence. However, what is novel about the diffuse support claims above is that these 'classic' political science lessons are being applied for the first time to the management of crises at the 'macro' level.

It is important to stress that the data in chapter seven are not being used in an attempt to establish the existence of diffuse support; that was not the intention of the thesis. The

concept of diffuse support has been used instead as a means of examining the relationship between parliamentary democracy and the management of crises. What the findings in chapter seven do confirm, however, is that a select group of political elites, all with crisis management experience, believe that the legitimacy of their respective parliamentary system can be an asset in the resolution of crises.

Underneath this specific finding it is possible to make some speculative claims about diffuse support generally on the basis that the attitudes of these interviewees may be indicative of many other British citizens. For example, many of the interviewees seemed to have never considered the 'grand' mechanics and psychological effects of the system of parliamentary democracy that they operated in; they appeared instead to accept unconsciously the legitimacy of their system and the subsequent benefits of that legitimacy (stability, resilience, policy co-operation). When presented with the simple logic of diffuse support and regime legitimacy, many interviewees responded as if they had never considered such 'macro' effects before; they merely accepted that the system worked in this regard. This attitude brings us to the heart of the concept of diffuse support – unconscious acceptance of the 'big picture' of liberal democracy as 'a good thing' with little consideration of detail. It is this unconscious acceptance of the parliamentary state that benefits crisis managers by generating a stable, resilient framework within which crises can be moderated and managed.

However, the generation of diffuse support cannot be considered to be more important to the management of these crises than representative functions performed at the meso and micro levels, particularly since specific support for those functions can also 'overflow' upwards to bolster regime stability. Moreover, at the institutional and individual levels, the legitimacy of specific crisis management authorities appears to be affected significantly more by the outputs of actively functioning representative processes. In this sense, what representative

institutions actually did was more important to the management of these crises than the tacit support generated by the mere existence of a legitimate parliamentary system. This conclusion requires to be tested further in future research because the balance of evidence may favour meso and micro functions simply because they are easier to understand. Constituency roles and parliamentary scrutiny mechanisms, for example, do not require detailed explanation, unlike the concept of diffuse support. It may well prove to be the case that a clearer understanding of that concept amongst the interviewees would have led to a more substantive body of data in support of the diffuse support hypotheses.

Conclusion

The decision to engage in research in this area was underpinned by a belief that, if linked together properly, parliamentary and crisis management perspectives could be used as analytical prisms; each capable of refracting novel insights about the other. The combination of parliamentary and crisis management perspectives in one analytical framework has shown that this is possible. The application of that framework to the case studies has produced a number of findings, which are relevant to those interested in crises, parliaments and representation. Ultimately, however, the principal lesson from the spectrum of findings displayed above can be reduced into one simple statement, which is of equal significance to both fields. *Representative functions can affect the politics and the operations of crisis management.* Whether interested in the relevancy of representation in the twenty-first century or the policy and politics of contemporary crisis management, the statement remains the same - British representative institutions matter.

Appendix A Interviewee List

Members of each representative assembly were approached because of their committee membership (agriculture, education or transport) or because they had identified themselves in official proceedings, or in some other way, as being active in one of the case studies. An even number of backbenchers from each of the three biggest parties was initially contacted in each assembly but it soon became apparent that party affiliation could not be standardised because of non-responses. Civil servants were identified and then prioritised as interview targets in a number of ways. Analysis of official documents provided an indication about the involvement of certain interviewees in each crisis. Other officials were contacted because they occupied prominent roles within departments that were related to the crises. These respondents were identified via the Civil Service Year Book and then contacted to determine if they had played a role in the crisis. Several subsequent respondents were also identified as important contacts by the interviewees themselves. It should also be noted that civil contingencies personnel were interviewed in Whitehall and Edinburgh who had little direct involvement in the case studies. They were chosen because of their pivotal position within the post-2004 resilience framework and their experience of crisis management processes. Eight of the interviewed officials requested a draft copy of the thesis prior to it becoming a public document so that they could ensure that their anonymity was retained and that the thesis reflected their contributions. After being sent a final draft, none of these contributors requested changes and all agreed that the interview data, as presented above, was accurate.

Alex Fergusson was a Conservative List MSP who represented the South of Scotland during the FMD crisis. Mr. Fergusson was contacted because his region was badly affected by the virus and because he was a member of the Scottish Parliament's Rural Development Committee during the epidemic. Alex Fergusson is currently the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament.

Andrew Miller was a Labour MP who represented Ellesmere Port and Neston during the fuel protests. Mr. Miller was contacted because his constituency contains the Stanlow oil refinery, which was the site of the original fuel blockade that began the protests.

Brian Donohoe is a Labour MP who represented South Ayrshire during the fuel protests. Mr. Donohoe was contacted because he was a member of the Commons Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Select Committee and the Transport Sub-Committee during the crisis.

Brian Monteith was a Conservative List MSP for Mid Scotland and Fife during the Scottish exam crisis. Mr. Monteith was contacted because he was a member of the Scottish Parliament's Education, Culture and Sport Committee and the Conservative Spokesman for Education during the crisis.

Brynle Williams was the leader of the Stanlow oil refinery blockade and a key spokesman for the fuel protestors during that crisis. Mr. Williams is now a Conservative List AM representing North Wales.

Cathie Peattie was a Constituency Labour MSP who represented Falkirk East during the Scottish exam and fuel crises. Mrs. Peattie was contacted because her constituency contains the Grangemouth oil refinery - the site of the one fuel blockade - and because she was the Deputy Convener of the Scottish Parliament's Education, Culture and Sport Committee at the time of the Scottish exam crisis.

David Borrow was a Labour MP who represented South Ribble during the FMD epidemic. Mr. Borrow was contacted because he was a member of the Commons Agriculture Select

Committee during that crisis.

David Curry was a Conservative MP who represented Skipton and Ripon during the FMD crisis. Mr. Curry was contacted because he held several ministerial positions within the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food between 1989 and 1997 and because he was Chair of the Commons Agriculture Select Committee during the epidemic.

Elaine Murray was a Labour List MSP who represented Dumfries during the FMD crisis. Mrs. Murray was contacted because Dumfries was significantly affected by the virus and because she was a member of the Scottish Parliament's Rural Development Committee at that time.

Glyn Davies was a Regional Conservative AM who represented Mid and West Wales between 1997 and 2007. Mr. Davies was contacted because he chaired the Welsh Assembly's Agriculture and Rural Development Committee during the FMD crisis.

Gwyneth Dunwoody was a Labour MP who represented Crewe and Nantwich during the fuel protests. Mrs. Dunwoody was contacted because she chaired the Commons Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Select Committee during that crisis.

John Griffiths was a Constituency Labour AM for Newport East during the fuel crisis and the FMD crises. Mr. Griffiths was contacted because he was a member of the Welsh Assembly's Environment, Planning and Transport Committee, which scrutinised the management of both those crises.

John Marek was a Labour Constituency AM who represented Wrexham during the fuel and

FMD crises. Mr. Marek was contacted because he was a member of the Welsh Assembly's Environment, Planning and Transport Committee during those crises and because he later became the Deputy Presiding Officer of the Welsh Assembly.

John Scott was a Conservative Constituency MSP who represented Ayr during the fuel and FMD crises. Mr. Scott was contacted because of the contributions he made in parliamentary debates about each of those crises; debates in which he expressed expert knowledge of transport and rural affairs policy. Mr. Scott is currently Deputy Convener of the Scottish Parliament's Rural Affairs and Environment Committee and Conservative Spokesman for Rural Affairs.

Kenny MacAskill was a Constituency SNP MSP who represented Edinburgh East and Musselburgh during the fuel protests. Mr. MacAskill was contacted because he made a number of public statements in the Scottish Parliament on behalf of the Road Haulage Association during the protests and because he was the the SNP's Transport Spokesman at that time. Kenny MacAskill is currently the Scottish Executive's Justice Minister.

Lembit Opik was a Liberal Democrat MP who represented Montgomeryshire during the FMD crisis. Mr. Opik was contacted because he was a member of the Commons Agriculture Select Committee and the Liberal Democrat spokesman for Welsh affairs at the time of the epidemic.

Mark Todd is a Labour MP who represented South Derbyshire. Mr. Todd was contacted because he was a member of the Commons Agriculture Select Committee during the FMD epidemic.

Marilyn Livingstone was a Constituency Labour MSP who represented Kirkcaldy during the Scottish exam crisis. Mrs. Livingstone was contacted because she was a member of the Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Committee during that crisis.

Michael Connarty was a Labour MP who represented Linlithgow and East Falkirk during the fuel protests. Mr. Connarty's was contacted because his constituency contained the Grangemouth oil refinery, which was the site of one large fuel blockade.

Mick Bates is a Constituency Liberal Democrat AM who represented Montgomeryshire during the FMD crisis. Mr. Bates was contacted because he was a member of the Welsh Assembly's Agriculture and Rural Development Committee at that time.

Oliver Heald was a Conservative MP who represented North East Hertfordshire during the English exam crisis. Mr. Heald was contacted because North East Hertfordshire had a high frequency of constituents affected by the re-grading issues.

Owen Paterson was a Conservative MP who represented North Shropshire during the FMD crisis. Mr. Paterson was contacted because he was a member of the Commons Agriculture Select Committee during the FMD epidemic and because he was also the Shadow Minister for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs between 2003 and 2005.

Paul Holmes was a Liberal Democrat MP who represented Chesterfield during the English exam crisis. Mr. Holmes was contacted because he was a member of the Commons Education and Skills Select Committee at that time.

SE Official A was a senior member of the State Veterinary Service during the FMD

epidemic who had significant 'front line' responsibilities in Scotland.

SE Official B was a senior policy official within the Scottish Executive's Environment and Rural Affairs Department during the epidemic who had 'front line' and strategic disease control responsibilities.

SE Official C is a senior official within the Scottish Executive's Civil Contingencies Division. This official was contacted because of their knowledge of Scottish contingencies policy.

SE Official D is a senior official within the Scottish Executive's Civil Contingencies Division. This official was contacted because of their knowledge of Scottish contingencies policy.

SE Official E was a senior official within the Scottish Executive Education Department during the Scottish exam crisis.

UK Official A was a parliamentary official who was contacted because they assisted the Commons Education and Skills Select Committee inquiry into the English exam crisis.

UK Official B was a parliamentary official who was contacted because they assisted the Commons Education and Skills Select Committee inquiry into the English exam crisis.

UK Official C was a senior policy official within the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food's Page Street office who was contacted because of the role that they played in the response to the FMD epidemic.

UK Official D was a senior policy official within the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food's Page Street office who was contacted because of the role that they played in the response to the FMD epidemic.

UK Official E was an official within the Department for Education and Skills who was seconded to the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority during the English exam crisis.

UK Official F occupied a senior position with the Cabinet Office's Civil Contingencies Secretariat. This official was contacted because of their knowledge of UK contingencies policy.

UK Official G occupied a senior position within the Department for Education and Skills during the English exam crisis. This official was contacted because she had responsibility for qualifications policy at that time.

UK Official H was a senior operations manager in one region of England during the FMD crisis. This official was contacted because he was a Regional Operations Director during the FMD epidemic, responsible for disease control in one English region.

WAG Official A was a senior member of the Welsh Assembly Government's Facilities and Emergencies Division. This official was contacted because he played a 'front line' role in the fuel crisis and had knowledge of Welsh contingencies policy.

WAG Official B occupied a senior position within the Welsh Assembly Government's Agriculture Department during the crisis. This official was contacted because of the role

they played in the Welsh response to FMD.

WAG Official C occupied a senior position within the Welsh Assembly Government's Agriculture Department during the crisis. This official was contacted because of the role they played in the Welsh response to FMD.

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