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Abstract

The concept of collective member of a political party is analysed and a typology is established. The West European context is mainly referred to, and the instances of collective membership in the main parties of the five “large” countries (France, Germany, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom) are considered.

1. Introduction

Typically the members of a party are natural persons. Nevertheless, there are cases in which it is possible that the members are not simple, but multiple: they are *collective members*.

We may consider two sorts of organized groups entitled to participate in the decisions of a political party. On the one hand, there are organizations submitted to the statutory jurisdiction of the party, even if they have juristic personality. On the other hand, collective members come to the fore: exogenous organizations, whose entitlement to power in the party qualifies them as members, whether they are dubbed so *de iure* or not.

Normally collective members are organizations having their own legal personality and wealth. Concerning the possibility that the members of the collective members may be also members of the party, there are three possibilities. Firstly, simultaneous membership is excluded. This is typically the case when a regional party has an agreement with a national party where the latter accepts a “hands off” clause: the national party refrains from setting up its organization (and putting forward candidates for elections) in the area covered by the regional party. Automatic transfer of membership in case of change of residence may then be part of the agreement. Secondly, simultaneous membership is accepted but simultaneous members are a minority in the collective member. It happens typically when the two bonds involved are of a different nature (e.g., professional and political). Thirdly, simultaneous membership is accepted and prevailing (or even automatic). Here the obvious question is where the real loyalty lies (e.g. associated parties to the French *UMP*), especially in case of conflict.

The concept of “collective member” of a party can be considered from a juridical or a political viewpoint. The former meaning can be made precise in every legal system, if thus intended; the latter one may have blurred contours. The legal system of the

country, the statutes (constitution and rules) of the party and the political customs and practice, delimit the rights and duties of members towards the juristic person that the party is. Even for natural persons, the statutes of the party may consider different categories of agents (e.g. in the currently two main Italian political parties: the *Partito Democratico* speaks of “iscritti” and “elettori”¹ and the *Popolo della Libertà* of “aderenti” and “associati”), and which are the real “members” is then a subject for further analysis.

In this paper we study the concept of collective member of a political party and try to establish a typology. Examples and counterexamples are considered for every main concept, although in politics the borders are sometimes blurred. We refer mainly to a West European context: all the instances of collective membership in the main parties of the five “large” countries (France, Germany, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom) are considered. In Sections 2 and 3 the issues of membership and articulation of a party are addressed. Section 4 deals with a proposed typology.

2. Membership

The concept of membership concerns the relation between members and some group they belong to. This relation is the result of a contract (usually an adhesion contract) between every member and the group. This contract is to be within the law, the constitution of the party and political customs.

When there is a contract between an organized group and a political party, one may ask whether this contract makes the group a collective member. The question is whether the contract makes the group, as such, a member of the party. Among all the agents related to a political party, its members are characterized as having the ultimate decision power in the party. This is especially the case for the constitutional (or statutory) decisions.

As defined above, a collective member of a political party is an organization exogenous to the party whose entitlement to power in the party qualifies it as member. Both the organization and the collective member are juristic persons, and thus all their decisions are made by their respective organs (in the case of decisions taken by direct ballot, the set of all members constitute an organ). The participation in power of the collective member in the political party can be exerted by its leadership or directly by the members of the collective member (in the latter case, a weighting may be given to the vote of the members of the collective member if also the personal members of the party are balloted).

When the participation of an organized group in the power of a political party is mainly exerted directly by the members of the group, the question arises whether the group as such is a collective member, or rather the members of the group are directly members of the party. This kind of question was already posed by Duverger (1958): “In the direct party the members themselves form the party community without the help of other social groupings [...] The indirect party is made up of the union of the component social groups (professional or otherwise) [...] On the other hand the idea of “indirect party”

¹ In Article 2.1 of the Statute of the Partito Democratico can be read: “For the purposes of this Statute, two agents of the internal democratic life are identified: *iscritti* and *elettori*”. (“Ai fini del presente Statuto, vengono identificati due soggetti della vita democratica interna: gli iscritti e gli elettori”).

supposes that there is no party community really distinct from the component social groups”². In fact, the answer to the question whether either the organized group or its members are members of the party, depends on how far the members of the group, when they participate directly in the decisions of the party, keep the decisional structure of the group.

An organized group is more than the sum of its members. Among them there are relations providing the group with a structure. Thus, as far as decision making is concerned, we can speak of the *decisional structure* of the group. It comprises the organization of the group, but also a feeling of belonging³ and norms (formal or informal) of behaviour. The decisional structure of a collective member of a political party is in principle affected by the fact that the collective member appertains to the party. On the other hand, it is through its decisional structure that the collective member (and thus its members, if this is the case) participates in the decisions of the party.

Who determines the framework for the relations among the collective members and the party? Certainly, there will be always bargaining and handling among the actors, but, in the end, who is to decide the rights of the collective members, and their weights in the organs of power?

There is a current party constitution and there are unwritten rules; usually a considerable inertia to alter the so established balance of power applies. At any rate, the contract between collective member and political party can be discontinued (whether this can be a unilateral decision depends on the law of the country), and then the collective member finishes being so. If an organization joins the party as collective member, then all members of the organization receive rights in the party. These rights in the party come automatically with membership of the organization. The party has no control on this sort of “indirect membership”. Certainly, an organization can be expelled from the party, if its character becomes unacceptable to the party⁴. A different question, as mentioned above, is whether members of the collective member can also be members of the party.

Sometimes the contract between collective member and party is a sort of adhesion contract, and the power share of the collective member, and the ways to exert it, are to be determined by the organs of the party (in which certainly the collective member may have a decisive weight); such is the case of the membership of the trade unions in the British Labour Party. Alternatively, it can be that the rules determining the power relations between collective member and party are set in the clauses of a pact between equals, and whose terms are bound to continue except for mutual agreement. In such a

² “Dans le parti direct, les adhérents forment eux-mêmes la communauté partisane, sans le relai d’autres groupes sociaux [...] Le parti indirect est constitué par l’union de groupes sociaux de base (professionnels ou autres) [...] La notion de “parti indirect” suppose au contraire qu’il n’y a pas de communauté partisane réellement distincte des groupes sociaux de base”.

³ It depends on the kind of party how strong is this feeling, being more, or less, near to the *psychological sense of community* as defined by Sarason (1974): “The perception of similarity to others, an acknowledged interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving to or doing for others what one expects from them, and the feeling that one is part of a larger dependable and stable structure”.

⁴ The British Labour Party has tried always to maintain its democratic purity by having repeatedly expelled organizations with communist leanings. The trade unions, so determinant in the party, were historically instrumental in this sense.

case, the party has no possibility to alter these rules on its own accord, and they tend to be rigid. There is no organ in the party able to adapt the rules of the game to changing circumstances. If the maintenance of the relation between collective member and party is politically “unavoidable”, the circumstances that led to the original constitutional pact, perhaps exceptional or contingent, remain frozen, exerting a strong influence on the future (a case of path dependence, v. Pierson (2004)).

3. Articulation

Characteristic of the organization of a political party, as of that of many groups, is articulation: in the structure of the party there are intermediate groups that articulate it. In this way the members of the party have a multiple membership: of the party as such and of one or more intermediate groups. These groups are endogenous, i.e. submitted to the statutory jurisdiction of the party.

An articulation of a party starts from a division of the population of the country which partitions it. By creating a system of endogenous groups this division is integrated in the organizational structure of the party so as to make the organization come closer to the individual member. As it results from a partition, each member of the party belongs, at least ideally, to one and only one of the groups constituting the articulation, which thus covers the whole party. The party can dispose, of course, of specialized organizations (for the young, for women, for the old...), improving the insertion of groups with special interests and serving as channels for better perceiving their demands. But in an articulation, in contrast with target groups, there is an essential equality of all components; there is no attempt to intensify the mediation efforts with a particular section of the community. An articulation has fundamentally both a universal and a symmetric character.

Typically the territorial partition provides the basic articulation of the party⁵: the intermediate groups correspond to geographical areas; normally there are several levels of articulation: local, regional... (often one of these levels is decisive, and the corresponding divisions have even juristic personality). But the territorial network is normally the only one reaching all individual members (i.e., it is exhaustive) and that which fundamentally interconnects the party and relates the members with the central organs. However, there may be cases in which there is also a parallel non-territorial articulation.

What other partition criteria, as alternatives to the territorial principle, strong enough as to be able to provide a universal articulation, could be put forward? The professional activity is a natural candidate, but to be a feasible option at least two conditions should be satisfied: (1) the party has an appreciable enough inter-class component; (2) there are (or there used to be) forces of loyalty to the party (cleavages or other) able to check the

⁵ The German law on political parties has an article on “articulation” (“Gliederung”), where it reads: “The parties are articulated in area associations. The size and boundaries of the associations are established by the statute. The area articulation must be unfolded so far as to make possible to the individual members an appropriate contribution to the formation of the will of the party“. (“Die Parteien gliedern sich in Gebietsverbände. Größe und Umfang der Gebietsverbände werden durch die Satzung festgelegt. Die gebietliche gliederung muss so weit ausgebaut sein, dass den einzelnen Mitgliedern eine angemessene Mitwirkung an der Willensbildung der Partei möglich ist”).

hefty internal tensions arising from an articulation in groups representing substantially different economic interests.

Duverger (1958) defines the centralization and decentralization of the party as the way in which power is distributed amongst the different levels of leadership. Among the general types of decentralization, he considers social decentralization, which “consists in organizing into an autonomous group, inside the party, each economic class: middle-class, agriculturists, salaried workers, etc., and in giving important powers to these corporative branches”⁶.

It is possible that the party refrains from integrating in its organization one of the sections of the partition of the population (e.g. a region in a territorial partition), perhaps forced by circumstances. If this section is taken up by some other party, there can be an agreement between this (small) party and the large party active in the other sections. This agreement may be of a coalitional kind, or rather involve the small party becoming a collective member of the large party: in both cases the small party *completes the articulation* of the large one. The latter more intimate sort of agreement is more likely if the partition follows a territorial pattern than if it follows e.g. a professional one.

The Austrian Popular Party (“ÖVP”) has a double articulation: territorial (“Landesparteien”) and sectorial, through interest sectors (“Teilorganisationen”). It is an archetypal case where the exclusivity of the territorial articulation does not hold. Both territorial and sector organizations have juristic personality. There are as many territorial parties as regions, and six sector organizations: for blue-collar and white-collar workers (“ÖAAB”), farmers (“ÖBB”), business people (“ÖWB”), women (“ÖFB”), young people (“JVP”) and senior citizens (“ÖSB”). Even if it is possible to be a member of the ÖVP without being also member of one of the sector organizations, this is in practice rare⁷. The three latter sector organizations have correlatives in many other parties, and respond to the idea of “natural groupings” for collectives supposed to need their own channels of representation and whose defence of interests is not considered particularly “divisive”. In contrast, the three former ones (ÖAAB, ÖBB and ÖWB) are supposed to represent all occupational sectors, to which are (were or are to be) bound, directly or indirectly, all citizens: they constitute a further articulation of the party, parallel to the territorial one. In fact, there are informal criteria for the sharing out of power among the three professional organizations. In this sense Müller (2006) writes: “When the composition of some body of the party is not to be decided through delegation of the professional organizations, but through election, there is an implicit apportionment (“Proporz”) among them, which today reaches still up to the leading bodies of the party, and earlier even included the top positions (leader of the party, general secretary, leader of the parliamentary group)”⁸.

⁶ “La décentralisation sociale ... consiste à organiser de façon autonome, au sein du parti, chaque catégorie économique: classes moyennes, agriculteurs, salariés, etc., et à donner des pouvoirs importants à ces sections corporatives”.

⁷ The admissions to party and sector organization are decided independently, although the application form is unified. The expulsion of the party is a joint decision of party and sector organization.

⁸ “Dort wo nicht bündische Delegation, sondern ein Wahlakt über die Zusammensetzung von Parteigremien entscheidet, gibt es einen impliziten Bündepporz, der heute noch bis in die Führungsgremien der Partei reicht und früher selbst die Spitzenpositionen (Parteiohmann, Generalsekretär, Klubohmann) einschloss”.

Certainly the fact that ÖAAB, ÖBB and ÖWB represent all occupational sectors does not mean that the membership of the ÖVP is a mirror image of Austrian society. No political party is, and so the French Socialist Party is said to be a party of teachers and academics in state education, not without a reason. Farmers, public servants (the common Austrian sees the ÖAAB as dominated by the public servants) and business people are over-represented in the ÖVP. In the case of the ÖVP these numerical predominances have reached some crystallization through the professional organizations.

In the German (Bavarian) CSU there are also organizations (“Arbeitsgemeinschaften”) for employees, business people and farmers (art. 27 of the Statute). However this panoply of organizations is not intended to articulate the party, but to look after specific groups, targeting the message of the party and channelling impulses and suggestions. The same can be said of the CDU, where there are organizations (“Vereinigungen”) for employees and business people (art. 38 of the Statute)⁹.

There is arguably some parallelism between the Gaullist “union” or “rassemblement” and the German “Union”. In the words of Schmid (1990), “the CDU has considered itself since its foundation above all as “union” and “popular party”, i.e. as an institution spreading beyond the old “Zentrum” party and a meeting-place of different interests, classes and denominations”¹⁰. Nevertheless, both in the case of CDU and CSU the occupational organizations are far from being structurally decisive. In that respect, Mintzel (1978) says: “The formal criterion of the existence in the Statute of special organizations and sub-organizations within the party or linked to the party cannot be used as a sign of the real existence of a “popular party” [“Volkspartei”]. In this sense the “Arbeitsgemeinschaften“ cannot be considered an essential structural element of the CSU”¹¹.

4. A typology

We consider three sorts of collective members, in accordance with whether the collective member is itself a political party, and with its embedding in the “large” political party:

1. The collective member is a political party and completes the articulation of the large political party.

⁹ At any rate, to articulate a political party on the basis of certain social dividing lines could be suicidal. The lines among religious denominations are a good example in the German Christian-democratic family. No less a person than Karl Bath resisted the idea of the interdenominational (but Catholic-dominated) CDU: “...If we were to cooperate with them, we should always be at a disadvantage –whereas we would seek to be guided by the Word of God in practical political questions, the Catholics would make their decisions on the basis of natural law and would take us for a ride before we had reached a conclusion in our deliberations” (quoted in Pridham (1977)).

¹⁰ “Die CDU versteht sich seit ihrer Gründung vor allem als “Union” und “Volkspartei”, d.h. als eine das alte Zentrum übergreifende Einrichtung und Sammelbecken unterschiedlicher Interessen, Schichten und Konfessionen”.

¹¹ “Das formal-staturarische Kriterium der Existenz innerparteilicher oder parteiverbundener Sonderorganisationen bzw. Suborganisationen kann nicht als Indikator für die reale Existenz einer “Volkspartei” verwendet werden. Ebenso wenig kann in den Arbeitsgemeinschaften ein wesentliches Strukturelement der CSU gesehen werden”.

2. The collective member is a political party and does not play a role in the articulation of the large political party.
3. The collective member is not a political party.

Thus the typology is provided by two dichotomous dimensions: the character (political or non-political) of the collective member, and the embedding (articulating or non-articulating) of the collective member in the political party.

	Embedding (articulating→non-articulating)	
Character (political→non-political)	Political, articulating	Political, non-articulating
		Non-political, non-articulating

4.1. Articulating agreement between political parties

We have seen above how a “small” political party can complete the articulation of a “large” party by becoming a collective member of the large one.

The laws on political parties of Germany, Austria and Spain impose that members of parties should be exclusively natural persons. Indeed, in the German and Austrian case collective members, as defined above, do not exist in political parties. However, in the Spanish case the complex relation between PSOE (“Partido Socialista Obrero Español”) and PSC-PSOE¹² (the Catalan socialists), a most important fact of Spanish politics, may be considered as the PCS being a collective member of the PSOE.

Firstly, the PSC is an organization exogenous to the PSOE. Apart from some (substantial) mutually agreed connections, the PSC is a fully sovereign political party. In particular, the establishment and maintenance of the agreement between PSC and PSOE is a decision of both of them. The PSC could break the “contract” without altering its structure. The fact that almost certainly this would mean a split in the PSC lies in the sphere of political consequences of political decisions.

Secondly, the entitlement to power of the PSC in the PSOE qualifies the former as a collective member of the latter.

In the PSOE the “Federal Congress” (“Congreso Federal”) is the source of all power. In the Federal Congress, held every three years (if not convened for a special meeting), the main organs of the party are elected: the “Federal Committee” (“Comité Federal”), the “Federal Executive Commission” (“Comisión Ejecutiva Federal”) and the General Secretary. In fact, the Federal Congress, far from being an acclaiming body of the decisions of the Executive Commission, has been historically the organ where the course of the party has been set.

In the words of Verge and Barberá (2009), “the relation between PSOE and PSC has been characterized by a considerable ambiguity”¹³. This relation is governed by the

¹² We shall shorten “PSC-PSOE” to “PSC” in the sequel.

¹³ “La relación entre el PSOE y el PSC se ha caracterizado por una notable ambigüedad”.

“Protocol” (1978), a document agreed on the occasion of the merger of the Catalan branch of the PSOE and two Catalan socialist parties of the time (PSC-C and PSC-R) to create the PSC-PSOE¹⁴. In this agreement the direct participation of the members of the PSC in the Federal Congress through delegates elected in the same way as those of the PSOE was established (thereby through the local branches, and in practice the decisional structure of the PSC is kept), as well as a representation of the PSC (proportional to the number of its members) in the Federal Committee and a participation in the Executive Commission. After the Federal Congress elects the General Secretary, (s)he proposes to the Congress the members of the new Executive Commission. According to the *Protocol*, the representatives of the PSC in the Executive Commission will be “proposed or endorsed where appropriate” by the PSC delegates in the Congress. Needless to say, this splendidly ambiguous wording has led usually to last minute bargaining between the just elected General Secretary and the leaders of the Catalan delegates in the Congress. Roller and van Houten (2003) speak of “the PSC-PSOE’s dual nature as a regional party and an affiliate of a national party”.

Initially PSOE and PSC formed separated parliamentary groups in the lower house of the Spanish parliament (“Congreso de los Diputados”), although “under common discipline of speech, action and vote”, the decisions being made after deliberation in common assembly and joint meeting of both permanent committees. Eventually a common parliamentary group was constituted, in whose executive organs the presence of PCS parliamentarians has been always above their proportion in the whole group; the vote discipline has been very strict (Colomé 2003). As in the Spanish Constitution the President of the Government is elected by the lower house of Parliament, and besides the upper chamber (“Senado”) has an ancillary role in the legislative procedure, the common action of PSOE and PSC in the “Congreso de los Diputados” brings about a common action in national politics. In fact, ordinary Spaniards perceive both entities as “the same thing”, at least at the national level¹⁵.

In the British Conservative Party, there is a relation with its Scottish organization that could seem similar to that between PSOE and PSC. In its Constitution¹⁶, the party considers as members not only the individual members (classified into “party members” and “Scottish party members”), but also the constituency associations and the “Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party” as such. In fact, the constituency associations are submitted to the party and provide its articulation. The Scottish party members participate like the other members in the election of the key organs of the party¹⁷.

The Constitution of the Conservative Party (Schedule 9) reads: “Scottish Party Members are bound by the provisions of the Constitution of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party (“SCUP”). Notwithstanding any other provision contained within

¹⁴ The possibility of this particular relation is recognized in the additional provision 1 of the Statute of the PSOE. About the *Protocol*, Hopkin (2009) says that “a confederal agreement was established in 1978 on the basis of a “unity protocol” which created a delicate compromise between socialist unity and Catalan distinctiveness. The new party – the PSC-PSOE – was a sovereign organization, but one that would participate in the statewide socialist project”.

¹⁵ Certainly the alleged dismembering character of the current PSOE-PSC scheme is becoming a salient issue among ordinary Spaniards.

¹⁶ In contrast with its country, the British Conservative Party has a written constitution since the internal reorganization pushed forward by William Hague in 1998.

¹⁷ Certainly the Scottish influence is limited by the fact that the weight of MPs is important in many decisions processes of the party, and Scotland hardly returns any Tory representative to Westminster.

this Constitution, the SCUP and Scottish Party Members shall therefore have only the following rights and obligations with respect to the Party within this Constitution... ”. In practice, the Scottish party cannot be considered a fully sovereign organization. There are two substantial differences between the Scottish Conservative Party and the Catalan PSC. Firstly, the “constitutional power” lies in the (central) Conservative Party, to which corresponds to delimit the relation between the Scottish section and the global party. In contrast, the relation between PSOE and PSC is determined by a bilateral agreement and the subsequent customs developing it, and the PSOE cannot alter it unilaterally. Secondly, the constituency associations in Scotland belong to the (global) party as such associations (although their members are “Scottish members”), and thus the supervision in the selection of candidates to the Parliament in Westminster corresponds to the global party. All in all, the Scottish Conservative Party can rather be considered an organization within the articulation of the global Conservative Party than a collective member as defined above.

Certainly the Scottish branch is not symmetric with the other territorial components of the British Conservative Party (as it is also the case with the PSC respect to the PSOE). “Symmetry” refers here to the quality that all party members, irrespective of the component they belong to, have the same rights and obligations concerning the central party and, in particular, have the same spheres of influence in making the common decisions. Typically, there can be an asymmetry when the border between central competences and territorial competences (i.e. those of the centre and those of the components) varies according to the territorial component. For example, the central organization of the party may have decision power in some matters of regional policy, whose effects go beyond the concrete region, in certain territorial components, but not in others. This asymmetry, if within bounds, does not impinge on the structure of membership, but on the relations between the centre and territorial components¹⁸.

4.2. Non-articulating agreement between political parties

Article 3 of the Statute of the French UMP (“Union pour un Mouvement Populaire”) contemplates the possibility that legal persons (political parties or not) are associated to the party. There is a line in French political thought, certainly shared by de Gaulle, according to which political parties are divisive, and thus terms like “rassemblement” or “union”, implying a capacity to joint different visions and parties, are to be preferred.

Admittedly, the Gaullism in the UMP is rather washed-out. Bréchon (2004) refers to the UMP as “a large party of the right in which the Gaullism, gradually emptied of its original substance, has dissolved”¹⁹. At any rate, the idea of “iunge et imperas” lies in the very birth of the UMP; in the words of Haegel (2007): “Officially created during the foundation congress of 17 November 2002, the “Union for a Popular Movement” (UMP) had to make an end of the plurality of organizations of the French right by bringing together its diverse components in a large party [...] The curve of unification

¹⁸ On the other hand, even if there is symmetry in competences, it is possible that members have a different weight in the decisions of the centre according to the component they belong to. These differences in weight may affect only particular sorts of decisions. In fact, questions of regional balance allow often the members of some territorial component to have over-proportional representation in the organs of the party (as it is often the case with regions in the institutions of the state).

¹⁹ “un grand parti de droite dans lequel le gaullisme, progressivement vidé de sa substance originelle, s’est dissous”.

has been taken and [...] the stake that represents the expression of the diversity of the French right wing currents is found henceforth essentially imported to the interior of the UMP²⁰. Among the political parties associated to the UMP are the Christian-Democratic Party (“Parti Chrétien-Démocrate”) and the Radical Party (“Parti Radical”); curiously enough, they represent the confessional party and the “laïque” party par excellence in France.

The relation between an associated legal person and the UMP is governed by the association agreement, a “contrat de droit privé” according to the French Law of Associations of 1901. It is usual to keep most clauses confidential. The agreement between associated parties and UMP usually stipulates that the joint candidate to the presidential election is to be chosen by the UMP. Also the parliamentarians elected to the National Assembly typically integrate into the common parliamentary group. As for the meaning of this to guarantee common political action, the personalized character of French politics²¹ and the fluidity of its party landscape are to be taken into account. Typically the members of the associated legal person become members of the UMP if they wish, a representation in the National Council of the UMP is agreed (under the conditions fixed by the Political Bureau of the UMP), and a subsidy is paid by the UMP to the associated legal person.

For any agreement between political parties, articulating or not-articulating, the question arises whether one of the parties becomes a collective member of the other, or there is merely a coalition between them.

In a coalition none of the parties receives an entitlement to decision power in the organizations of the other parties. Here it is necessary to distinguish between the decisions taken by the organization of the party and those made by their members in the institutions of the state. Sometimes this distinction is not easy, and this is particularly the case with parliamentary groups. In the British tradition, parliamentary groups are part or the organization of the parties and relevant in their internal decisions²². In continental political parties, parliamentary groups are not in general part of their organization, although they are arguably part of their decision structure. Then it may be that the parties in a coalition join in a single parliamentary group. This is the case of CDU and CSU in the German *Bundestag*. In general, it is difficult to say how far the party allegiances of the members of such mixed parliamentary groups shape the political alignments in the discussions and how a common position is reached, both within the members of each party and in the whole group, either by majority voting or negotiation. As for the CDU and the CSU in the *Bundestag*, there is one organized subgroup for each party. The current accord between the parties lays down: “Fundamental political

²⁰ “Officiellement créée lors du congrès fondateur du 17 novembre 2002, l’Union pour un mouvement populaire (UMP) devait mettre fin à la pluralité des organisations de la droite française en rassemblant ses diverses composantes dans un grand parti [...] Le tournant de l’unification a été pris et [...] l’enjeu que représente l’expression de la diversité des droites françaises se trouve désormais, et pour l’essentiel, importé à l’intérieur de l’UMP”.

²¹ Who is the incumbent President of the Republic, and whether s(he) belongs to the UMP, is an important consideration.

²² V. in this regard McKenzie (1963), where it can be read that “whatever the rôle granted in theory to the extra-parliamentary wings of the parties, in practice final authority rests in both parties [Labour and Conservative] with the parliamentary party and its leadership. In this fundamental respect the distribution of power within the two major parties is the same”.

decisions of the parliamentary group CDU/CSU are to be taken only in agreement between both subgroups”²³.

4.3. Agreement between two sorts

The British Labour Party admits in its structure not only individual members, but also “affiliated organisations”, among which the trade unions play a very important role in the life and governance of the party. Half of the total voting entitlement in the Party Conference corresponds to the affiliated organisations (in practice, mostly the trade unions), and half of the elective members of the NEC (“National Executive Committee”) are appointed by the trade unions. In the election of the party leader, the same voting entitlement (one third each) is apportioned to the affiliated organisations, to individual members, and to members of the Commons and the European Parliament. The election procedure to elect their delegates in the Party Conference is up to every union (these delegates choose in turn the representatives in the NEC), whereas for the election of leader of the party it is laid down that all union members paying the “political levy” should participate on a one-person-one-vote basis.

The members of the affiliated trade unions can opt out of paying the political levy, in whose case they have no right to vote in the decisions of their union as affiliated organisation of the party. But this “opting out” must be explicit. On the contrary, between 1927 and 1946 the acceptance to pay had to be explicit (otherwise the political levy was not exacted), and the result was a marked fall in the number of trade unionists paying the political levy.

When collective members are not political parties, they normally represent interest groups. Thus rival parties may claim to defend the national interest and not that of a particular group. In a time of falling partisanship (v. e.g. Dalton and Wattenberg (2009)), parties trying to represent a particular section of society risk missing decisive electoral targets. Certainly it has been affirmed that historically the trade unions have been moderate in applying their clout in the Labour Party: “Restraint has been the central characteristic of the trade union-Labour Party relationship”²⁴. At any rate, after the “winter of discontent” in 1978-79, the prevailing perception among the British electorate was that the Labour Party was too dependent on the unions, and besides that the interests of the unions did not coincide in several substantial issues with the national interest. A succession of electoral defeats (until the “New Labour” victory of 1997) prompted the party to reduce gradually the power of the unions *qua* unions in its organization. Quinn (2004) comments on the process: “Everyone in the Labour Party wants to win elections but they sometimes differ over how to do so. It is those that value office-seeking above else who gain the upper hand inside a party the longer it is in opposition. An unsuccessful party is like a plummeting hot-air balloon: if initial attempts to regain height are unsuccessful, items must be thrown overboard until the fall is halted and height regained. The longer a party is out of office, more policies must be changed; organisational change is often a prerequisite for policy change, as the power-bases of those groups that cling to the old policies are undermined”.

²³ “Grundsätzliche politische Entscheidungen der CDU/CSU-Fraktion erfolgen nur im Einvernehmen zwischen beiden Gruppen”.

²⁴ V. Minkin (1992).

The trade unions, not being political parties, are clearly (even archetypically) collective members of the British Labour Party. This is not the case of the three professional organizations, ÖAAB, ÖBB and ÖWB, articulating the Austrian ÖVP, as seen above.

Article 9.1 of the Organisation Statute of the ÖVP reads: “The sector organizations must work together when they carry out the federal election issues, campaigns and contests. The guidelines and task assignments provided for this purpose by the federal party are compulsory”. This normative insistence, appearing in other places of the Organisation Statute, responds to what historically has been a succession of conflicts and coordination problems. When Alois Mock was elected President of the party in 1979, he set himself as one of his main goals to establish clearly the preponderance of the federal party on the professional organizations. Although something has been done since then in this direction, the ÖAAB, ÖBB and ÖWB are still a key factor in the dynamic (and the static) of the party²⁵.

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²⁵ About the position of the professional organizations in the funding of the ÖVP, v. Sickinger (2009).

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