Identity Cards and Political Commitment: a study in the formation, operationalisation and measurement of a concept

by

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Abstract

This thesis presents a new definition of the concept of political commitment. It shows how the concept can be operationalised for empirical research in parliamentary and executive settings, and reports findings from a study to measure the commitment of the Labour Government to its identity card policy. Drawing on literature from across the social sciences, the thesis derives an eight-limbed synthesis definition of the concept. This new definition is operationalised for empirical examination in a single case study of British identity cards policy between 2001 and 2006. The Labour government's stance towards compulsory identity cards remained robust in the face of strong parliamentary, media and pressure group opposition, and is offered as an "extreme" case study of commitment. The thesis uses these findings to evaluate the concept formation and operationalisation process, and compares results in operationalising for the parliamentary and executive arenas. Data are drawn from elite interviews, parliamentary archives, biographies, and policy documents. The thesis concludes that this new approach to political commitment allows for a nuanced understanding of the concept, which offers a more accurate description of the relationship between governments and "object" of their commitment than the existing theory permits. It also provides a solid foundation for the development of explanatory models of political commitment, in the future.

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Chapter One – Introduction

This thesis is concerned with the concept of political commitment. Its original contribution to knowledge consists in the formation, the operationalisation and the specification of measures for that concept, together with its empirical testing. The organisation of this thesis is as follows. The process of concept formation is conducted by drawing on a range of literatures from across the social science, which utilise the notion of commitment. Through deductive inference, the nature of political committed is mapped and analysed, and a new multi-limbed definition of the term is offered. The concept is further refined and developed through a series of empirical tests conducted in a methodologically and theoretically significant illustrative empirical case drawn from modern British politics. Finally, the thesis concludes by pulling together and integrating the inferences made on the basis of these tests, to form warranted judgements about the concept of political commitment's empirical performance and its theoretical robustness.

Within the broader ambitions of the thesis, the role of this first chapter is twofold. Its first task is to make the case for why we should be interested in concept formation at all, and why in particular, we need a new concept of political commitment. It is here that the relationship between the existing understanding of the policy making process and the new

conceptualisation of political commitment offered by this thesis is set out. The second task is to make clear the rationale behind the case selection strategy. This is achieved by appealing to the methodological literature on case selection, and by offering some background empirical material to demonstrate the sorts of information upon which the initial assessment about case selection was made. This discussion is contextualised by information about the broader cross-national politics of identity cards unfolding at the time of the Labour Government's interest in the scheme, as well as a discussion of the historical stance adopted by successive governments towards state identity documents. The chapter concludes by pointing out those elements of the argument that are carried forward into Chapter Two.

Commitment in political science

Although the concept of commitment is well used elsewhere in the social sciences, within the field of politics it has largely been ignored, particular with respect to the analysis of policy decisions. A sceptic might point to this fact and ask the legitimate question of why, if indeed political science has managed perfectly well without a concept of commitment up until now, is this thesis really necessary? Does the discipline of political science generally, and the study of policy making in particular, really need this new concept? Might not an existing body of theory already offer a way of dealing with what this thesis has chosen to call "commitment"?

It is my strong contention that the work of this thesis is important because a well developed concept of political commitment is implied by a range of research questions in

political science, that currently we have no adequate means of addressing without using the concept. That is to say, a number of questions in political science need a concept of commitment to provide the vocabulary to adequately and precisely specify either what it is we need to explain, or else what it might be which does the explaining. For example, the question of why a government might pursue a policy which, even in principle, is unwelcome to its supporters implies the need for a well formed concept of commitment as the *explanandum*. Governments that knowingly and under their own volition, make highly unpopular decisions with respect to initial policy selection, and then attempt to establish those policies in law, expose themselves to significant risks. In the absence of strongly acting external imperatives or constraining forces, such a government could convincingly be described as acting with commitment. Similarly, there are questions in political science which might require a concept of commitment as, at least a part of a larger set of phenomena, which shoulder the burden of explaining outcomes. For example, we might look to commitment as part of an explanation of the differences in governments' policy positions in otherwise very similar empirical cases. In such examples, we need a well specified concept of political commitment before we can complete the task of adequately specifying the *explanans*. Without a clear understanding of what is being explained, or what we are calling upon to do the explaining, we cannot hope to offer precise theoretical statements on the basis of our empirical research. A clear concept of commitment is therefore necessary before the sorts of empirical puzzles implied by the questions set out above can be convincingly addressed.

Even if one is convinced of the need for a definition, it might still be the case that an existing body of theory is already well enough equipped with, a perhaps implicit, concept of commitment. Alternatively, it might be the case that an existing body of work obviates

the need for the concept all together. A promising candidate for an existing concept of commitment, and to which is attributed explanatory power, can be found in the work of Bueno de Mesquita (e.g. 2009). In the context of offering "predictions" about likely future government behaviour, Bueno de Mesquita puts forward the variable of "resolve" into his game theory equations, as a measure of how determined an actor is to persist with a course of action. Unfortunately, Bueno de Mesquita is not concerned to consider the meaning of the phenomenon at a fundamental level. Instead, "resolve" is simply equated with "determination", or even "persistence". This leaves a great deal unsaid, especially if we are to accept Bueno de Mesquita's claim that this variable is to explain a proportion of an outcome. Whilst coming close to offering a way to proceed, the unexplored nature of Bueno de Mesquita's usage of the dummy variable "resolve" does not provide an account of what commitment means in a political context, or even how we might determine the degree of resolution a particular actor might hold. A more detailed analysis of the concept is clearly required. Indeed, this point is shown to be particularly significant in Chapter Two where it is demonstrated that "resolve" is but one element of what it means to commit.

As well as Bueno de Mesquita, a number of other scholars working in political science, within the rational actor tradition, are also interested in political commitment, and so any potential that their work could render this thesis otiose must be considered from the outset. Most of them approach the concept from a game theory perspective where the focus is on the "credibility" of actor's commitment claims. An important element of this approach to commitment holds that decisions made by rational actors are, in part, dependent on their expectations about the future behaviour of others. If political actors who enter into negotiations are able to establish the credibility of their commitments to

act or behalf in a particular manner at some future point, they will be more likely to encourage "cooperative behaviour" in others (e.g. Elster, 1985). Credible commitments are therefore seen as useful strategies for helping to remove uncertainty about other actor's future behaviour.

The insights of the credible commitment literature are of some value, and will be returned to later in Chapter Two. However, the usage of the concept of "credible commitment" in this literature is far too restricted to capture the full range of beliefs, intentions and behaviours which can be observed or inferred from a committed actor. For example, it is not obvious how a game theory approach to commitment would cope with a case where an actor continues to pursue (or is committed to) an objective far beyond the point at which its attainment is still in their strategic interest.

An alternative way to understand the rationale behind this thesis is to begin with the question of where this thesis' ambitions, with respect to the development of a concept of political commitment, fit within the broader canon of political science theory? Put differently, to what extent is the concept which is the focus of this thesis, developed as a prolegomenon to a theory of commitment, best understood as a theory of policymaking?

The development of a new conceptualisation of political commitment, its operationalisation and the specification of measures, together with its testing in an illustrative empirical case, together make up the original and innovative contribution to knowledge of this thesis. However, the argument also identifies a significant new research agenda. If the arguments presented in this thesis are accepted, then a focus on political commitment not only suggests such a research agenda, but as a consequence, implies that

the current understanding of the policy making process offered by existing theory is somewhat incomplete. By focusing on the notion of political commitment, we are prompted to consider again what is involved when a government actually goes about "making" policy. This takes us beyond discussions of "agenda setting" and debates about the distribution of power and the disaggregation of the political and administrative executive. It is implied by focusing on government's commitment to policies, that the formulation, refining, describing, communicating and contesting of initial policy decisions must surely all constitute part of the process of what it means to "make" policy.

Policy making does not end after an issue has been adopted as part of a government's or a department's agenda. Officials in government departments must write policy papers, and ministers from the relevant sponsoring department must make the case for the policy at Cabinet. The policy may be contested, especially in the context of a crowded legislative timetable, and in doing so, ministers know that opportunities to initiate policy in other areas must be forgone. Even after this process ends and Cabinet has consented, the Government as a collective actor must then argue the case for the policy in Parliament, perhaps against strong opposition. Much of this activity is assumed or is simply ignored by the current literature on the policy process. It leaves a great deal unsaid about the process of moving from an idea, or a set of interests with a preference, to the point at which policy is entered onto the statue books. Instead, a full account of what is mean by policy-making must incorporate the behaviours of political actors between the point at which an agenda is set, or the initial policy decision by a minister or department has been reached, and include an analysis of the risks a policy must run before it finds its way onto the statute books, and what these risks imply for the relevant political actors.

In recent political science, a great deal of work on agenda setting, distributions of power among actors, the organisation of ideas and preferences, which does claim to offer a complete account of policy-making has been conducted in the tradition of analysing "policy networks". As Börzel (1998) points out, a "Babylonian" array of definitions of network types and applications exits in this substantial body of literature. The wide ranging and international flavour of much of the contemporary work in this area makes generalising from across its breadth problematic (Rhodes, 2006). Attempts to do so would require significant time and space, and would unnecessarily shift the focus of this thesis too far away from closely defined methodological ambitions. This following discussion therefore limits itself to the efforts to apply network theory in the context of mostly British politics.

The various types of policy networks identified in the literature are generally held to share a number of common features. The term "network" describes relations of interaction between a government and a range of interested societal actors (e.g. Grant, 2000; Smith, 1990), or between intra-governmental actors (Rhodes, 1988; 1997). These relationships occur in vertical "segments" clustered around specific issues or policy fields, so the nature of the relationships between actors differs between policy fields, because each contains a different constellation of individuals and organisations (Marsh and Rhodes, 1992). Although actors operating in a policy network might have diverse goals, they are drawn together by a shared interest in influencing the making of government policy, and by a dependency on other actor's resources (Rhodes, 1988). Actors attempt to achieve their individual goals through participation in networks of interaction based on the mutual exchange of resources.

The network approach's emphasis on non-hierarchical, relationships and power-dependency is a key departure from the traditional hierarchical Westminster Model of British politics. Policy making within networks does not come about through strong central control or dictat, but instead through efforts of coordination and the mutual exchange of resources, characterised by a shift from "government" to "governance" (Rhodes, 1997). The relationships between actors in networks are characterised by the notion of power-dependency. Not only are resources unevenly distributed, no actor in the network has a monopoly on the use of resources or has all the resources they require to achieve their desired objectives, so all must engage in the process of resource exchange in order to influence outcomes. The interdependency of actors and the requirement to engage in the mutual exchange of resources therefore describes both the nature of the relationships between actors in the network, and defines the contours of that network (Rhodes, 1988, 1997).

Whilst being variously criticised for lacking clarity and explanatory power (see Dowding, 1995; 2001) a number of authors writing in this tradition do make explanatory claims for their work, suggesting that differences in types of policy network impact on the nature of the policy process, thereby implying that networks have the potential to influence policy outcomes.

As a causal claim, the role of a network can be understood in several distinct ways. For example, Rhodes seems to suggest that an actor's capacity to utilise resources effectively provides the opportunity to steer policy or "…maximise its scope for decisional manoeuvre (or discretion) and be able to choose amongst various courses of action or

inaction." (Rhodes, 1988, p. 43). Marsh and Rhodes (1992) agree, arguing that the existence of a network will influence, though not determine, policy outcomes.

For example, Smith (1990), makes that case that, in agriculture policy, producer interest groups have been particularly successful in their efforts to influence policy making, because of the limited access to the "policy community" (a form of policy network characterised by tight integration of its membership structure, and routinize working practices), and because of the shared beliefs of its existing members. In this example, the closely knit nature of the internal structure of the network excludes dissenting voices, with producer groups "capturing" departments, and holding an effective monopoly on the policy making agenda.

In the American literature, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) make a somewhat different claim about "advocacy coalitions", which they define in ways that make them equivalent to "policy networks" in British parlance. Whereas the British literature tends to concentrate on interests and treats ideas simply as convenient strategies, the "advocacy coalition framework" makes beliefs and ideas fundamental, as it is from beliefs that an actor's interests are derived. Focusing on "policy subsystems" in a given policy area, the advocacy coalition framework suggests that public policy programmes are sets of ideas, or "value priorities" and hierarchically organised "belief systems", together with "causal assumptions" about how they might be realised. Coalitions utilise "guidance instruments" to influence the relevant government actors in the subsystem in which they operate, so that government actor's behaviour is consistent with the coalition's set of beliefs. Whilst the belief system of the dominant coalition in a subsystem determines the direction of policy, it is access to resources and their effective utilisation, particularly with respect to

knowledge, which determines the coalition's capacity to influence. For Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) it is the dominant coalition's belief system which drives policy, until such a time as that coalition no longer remains in power within the subsystem, and is replaced.

Although Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) emphasise ideas and resource utilisation, and Smith (1990) emphasises the structural features of the network, and their capacity to limit participation and set the agenda, both of their arguments imply some degree of control of the relevant government department which takes place before policy can be influenced. Without the department's acquiescence, neither interests nor ideas have access to the machinery of government and so are unable to exert decisive influence over the formation of policy. In both of these accounts, policies are the product of "sectoral" bargaining, between ministers and their departments who have "clientelistic" dispositions towards those coalitions of interests who are in a dominant position in the particular subsystem or network.

Both of these accounts, however, offer only a description of how organised interests are able to communicate their views to government departments, which, because of the nature of the relationship within which they are engaged, are likely to take them up. Neither of these accounts makes a convincing case for how, once a policy is established as an element of a government's agenda, it then becomes law. The advocacy coalition framework deals poorly with situations in which ideas may be less important than convenience, short-term political accommodation or presentation. On the other hand, "capture" only describes certain special situations, and cannot account for the more fluid and competitive relations typically found between pressure groups, groups internal to the

executive, legislators, ministers and senior civil servants. Moreover, there are situations in which governments persist with policies in the face of determined opposition by both interest and pressure groups: the "capture" account of policy networks has little traction in such cases. Each of these accounts of the policy-making process is therefore incomplete.

In his later work, Rhodes makes the case that policy networks are important because "…they decide which issues will be included and excluded from the policy arena." (1997, p. 34), suggesting that setting the agenda contributes to policy outcomes. Importantly, Rhodes' position places much emphasis on a perceived lack of capacity at the centre of government, which has supposedly come about because of fundamental changes in the organisation of the centre of the Britain state. A much greater emphasis is also given to the "fragmentation" and "separation" of the different elements of the state, where informal institutional features and practices have replaced traditional institutions, and are heavily implicated in the formulation of government policy (Dunleavy and Rhodes, 1995; Rhodes, 1997). Instead, the state is best understood as "a collection of inter-organisational networks made up of government and societal actors with no sovereign actor able to steer or regulate" (Rhodes, 1997a, p. 57). In fact, few scholars have been persuaded by Rhodes' claim that central government ministers and their departments of state lack sufficient autonomy, centrality, information or other resources, to be pre-eminent powers in the policy process (Bevir and Rhodes, 2003; 2006).

For example, Smith (1999) and Marsh (e.g., Marsh et al, 2001) disagree with the "hollow state" view, although Smith recognises that policy outcomes are strongly influenced by resource mobilisation and that "[t]he strength of … bargaining position will depend on the resources they hold and how much other actors need their resources (1999, p. 31). On his

view, however, it is government departments which are the most important actors in policy networks, as they tend to have more resources, and therefore more opportunity to influence outcomes. The distribution of power is therefore asymmetrical (Smith, 1999; Marsh et al, 2001). This perspective allows for a coherent collective agent within the state which could be committed, but it still does not explain why in a particular case the possibility of commitment might be realised.

Rhodes' argument does raise pertinent questions about the extent to which central government can actively contribution to the policy making process. However, his position seems at odds with the aims of this thesis, which are to point to ways to extend the understanding of policy-making, and government commitment to policy. If the centre has no control, it can hardly be said to be committed. The implication of Rhodes' argument is that he would clearly see this as a possibility. For Rhodes, the identification of key sectoral interests, or coalitions of interest, with sufficient resources and skills in their mobilisation, would furnish enough explanatory leverage to explain why a government might persist with a policy stance, even in the face of resistance. However, it is easy to see why arguments about the power of sectoral interests are more often used in empirical work to explain why governments do not sustain commitment (e.g., Pemberton, 2004) than to explain why they do. If the centre must be content with only "loose leverage" over networks, then we need a more detailed understanding of the mechanics of policy making. For in that case, we still lack an account of the process by which a government or department might sustain a particular stance for long enough for it to become law especially if the costs of doing so are judged to be heavy or highly uncertain. Neither is it obvious how even a well-resourced interest group's influence could extend beyond the

point of original policy decision, so that commitment could be sustained until implementation. A much clearer account of this process is required.

A final point needs to be made with respect to network theory. It is not enough to point to the distribution of power in the core executive for an account of policy making and by implication, commitment, as this is simply a question of capacity. For example, in their discussion of central-local government relations, Dunleavy and Rhodes (1983), Rhodes (1997) and Smith (1999) all make the claim that resources provide the "potential" for bringing about desired outcomes. This is explained by the exercise of power where the realisation of this potential is dependent on the effective deployment of resources. However, not all resources enable people to get what they want, even when the actor is highly skilled, especially is they are required to face significant resistance. As we shall see in later chapters, capacity is a central element of what it means to be committed, but it is only one element of a much broader set of phenomena. Capacity to commit does not imply a willingness to commit. Even the combination of capacity to commit and an intention to do so still falls short of an account of commitment. For example, governments sometimes pursue objectives beyond the point at which it is not clear that it remains in their interests to do so.

It is unclear how the policy networks approach to understanding policy making would offer an explanation that went beyond describing how certain privileged groups were able to influence which policies found their way onto the agenda, or were kept from it, or even which policies were adopted by a government over time, at least for a while. This is what is most salient for the current discussion of government's commitment to policy. As will be discussed later in this thesis, commitments require actors to persist with courses of

action against adversity over time, perhaps also when the costs of doing so are rising. Although networks might "…resist government steering, develop their own policies and mould their own environments" (Rhodes, 1997c, p. xii), it is not clear that they are in themselves capable of ensuring that a government remains committed, in the sense outlined here.

The network approach has a valuable contribution to make with respect to the mechanics of policy making in terms of setting the agenda, and recognising the nature of the distribution of power. Understood in these terms however, it offers rather an attenuated understanding of what it means to "make" policy. For it rests on the assumption that once issues are on the agenda, or once we have identified those actors who, through their interactions and skilful mobilisation of resources, or who through their advantageous structural position within the network occupy powerful positions, we can simply read off policy outcomes. Instead, the primary contribution of the network approach might be better understood as a theory of power within the core executive, which usefully highlights its "fluid" and "relational" qualities, based on relations of exchange. This conceptualisation of power and exchange underscores how relationships between actors are not based on control, but instead are based on interdependence, thereby rejecting a commodity conceptualisation of the notion of power. This leaves the way open for a theory of policy making which extends beyond initial issue selection, and focuses on negotiation, and sustaining intentions under situations of risk, and in the face of resistance. In short, an understanding of policy making is required that can account for political "commitment". It is just such an understanding to which the concept of commitment developed in this thesis is a prolegomenon.

Concept formation

As was stated earlier, the primary aims of this thesis are methodological. Before political science can develop coherent and credible explanatory models dealing explicitly with political commitment to a policy, we first need to be clear about what it is that we are discussing. A primary task, therefore, is the stipulation of a definition through the process of concept formation.

Concept formation is an issue that has been gaining increasing attention in empirical social research (e.g. Clasen and Siegel 2007; Jorden *et al*, 2004; Radaelli, 2003), as well as in the methodological literature (Collier and Gerring, 2008; Gerring, 1999; Goertz, 2006), and for good reason. Unless we are first able to recognise, define and measure a dependent variable, it is not possible to develop independent variables, theories or models for explanation (Goertz, 2005). Recognition of this fact promotes the process of concept formation to the status of at least as important an activity as the development or the testing of theory (Gerring, 1999). Indeed, Johnson (2003) goes further to argue that political science's lack of attention to concept formation "…subverts the possibility of progress in the discipline." (p. 88). Regardless of the theoretical sophistication or innovation of the research findings, or the complexity of the specific methods employed at the level of data analysis, if the concepts utilised in the research are not methodologically robust, warranted inferences cannot be drawn from data to conclusions (6 and Bellamy, 2011). Imprecision in concept formation strips social science of much of its capacity for producing the sort of insight for which it is unique. The discussion earlier in this chapter sought to make the case for the significance of political commitment as a previously neglected area of political science. The necessary concept formation work is

yet to be undertaken with respect to political commitment, so it is this task which forms the central concern of this thesis.

Concept formation asks the question of what attributes a particular concept can be expected to have, how they might be recognised, and what means can be used to gauge their extent. The key aim is to enable operationalisation and measurement of concepts for use in empirical research, and to enable us to distinguish differences between meanings in different theories, perhaps from different research traditions. The process of concept formation utilised in this thesis yields a concept which is partly classical, but with additional "sufficient" conditions attached (Sartori, 1970). No suitable candidates for a concept of political commitment exist, and so the concept formation strategy employed follows a deductive, multi-attribute approach which draws on a range of literatures from across the social sciences to develop a new concept. Because the objective is to offer an operationalisable concept, the focus of this task is on how the concept of commitment has been used empirically in the existing literature, and how these insights can be used to develop a new concept of *political* commitment.

Importantly, this thesis draws on extensive empirical material from the identity cards case study to assist in the process of concept formation. There are several reasons for adopting this approach. Without studying a specific empirical case, it is possible to derive notions from a range of literatures that might be relevant to understanding political commitment. It is also possible to order them a little, and, *a priori*, begin to understand the relationship between the concept's different parts- indeed, this is precisely the strategy employed in Chapter Two of this thesis. Without reference to some empirical material, however, we can only get so far. It is only when a concept is examined against a concrete example that

we can see which parts of the concept are really necessary and which others might be superfluous. Similarly, when working with a case it is possible to develop relationships between composite elements of a concept that have some empirical grounding. Finally, only by developing a concept against a case is it possible to find out whether a definition can be turned into a feasible, practicable set of measures. In doing so, it should be possible to use the empirical case to develop and refine those measures, if indeed the definition with which one is working proves to be of use (6 and Bellamy, 2011).

Case selection strategy

Although ideally we might like to examine a definition and a set of measures against many cases, there is an advantage in beginning with a detailed examination of a single case, if that case is selected carefully. One approach to the selection of a single case is to choose to focus on an "extreme" case. This means that a "score" (qualitative or quantitative) attributed to a phenomenon of interest is located towards the further extremes of a given distribution, for example, a very strong or very weak instance of a phenomenon (Gerring, 2007). For this study in concept formation, it makes sense to select an extreme case at the "strong" end of a distribution, i.e. a case which is an example of strong commitment. This is because with a strong case, we are more confident that the phenomenon being studied is actually an example of the concept in which we are interested. Moreover, an extreme case of commitment is more likely than a weaker case to exhibit clear examples of the features to be considered in the definition (Gerring, 2007). Similarly, Henn *et* al (2009) and Yin (2005) make the argument that the study of a

single case offers depth. Studying an extreme case in depth allows for the full examination of all the candidate components of any definition that might be produced.

Given the criteria set out above, a suitable example of strong or "extreme" political commitment is the Labour administration's stance towards identity cards policy under Prime Minister Blair. In the face of significant controversy, the Government's intention to legislate and to introduce an identity cards scheme proved to be robust, at least for a period of time. Echoing Bueno de Mesquita (2009), the British Government's stance showed "resolve" as the contentious nature of the issue forced the Government to defend its position robustly. Additionally, historical accounts point out how the position adopted by the Blair administration represented a clear break with the established sceptical policy stance of successive British Governments toward such schemes (Agar, 2001). This makes a display of strong commitment all the more intriguing, because it captures a clear break with a well established policy tradition.

The following section of this chapter sets out to make the argument for taking the case of the Labour Government's stance towards the identity cards policy as one of "extreme" commitment, in case selections terms. It also aims to demonstrate the intrinsic empirical interest associated with the case. To this end, the chapter presents a descriptive account of the policy. It begins by setting out the political, technological and administrative context for the policy's development, including the international environment within which the British debate unfolded. It then offers a timeline of the proposals, detailing major events and significant changes, before presenting a broad description of what the Government was committed to over this period. The key point here is that to fully understand the nature of the Government's commitment in this case, it is necessary to

distinguish between government intentions with respect to both "means", as the administrative and technical ambitions for the scheme, and "ends", as the menu of policy objectives the Government suggested the scheme might address.

The policy detail and descriptive account of context presents a background against which a summary of the types of opposition faced by the Government are set out. Finally, the discussion is placed in historical context in an effort to demonstrate the intrinsic empirical interest implied by strong commitment to a policy which represents a significant shift from a well established policy position. The chapter argues that the commitment displayed by the Government towards the introduction of identity cards was considerable, and this makes the case a suitable candidate for the task of concept formation.

Policy chronicle

This section of the chapter presents some basic empirical facts about the case study, for two reasons. Firstly, it delineates the boundaries of the case so that the process of making comparisons between actors and between different points in the policy process can operate more precisely. Secondly, because of the aims of the thesis are predominantly methodological, some of the empirical detail offered here are not included in the main empirical section of the thesis, but are nevertheless essential for a full understanding of the case. By dealing with the necessary details here, the remaining chapters can focus more clearly on the methodological argument.

The Home Office's considerations of the merits of the introduction of a British identity card were first publically mooted soon after the 11th of September 2001 terrorist attacks against the US. The then Home Secretary, the Rt. Hon David Blunkett MP, first indicated a degree of interest in a scheme when being interview on BBC Radio Four's *Today Programme* (BBC, 2001). At this stage Blunkett took care to distance himself from the on-going discussion around terrorism prompted by the September 11th attacks, stressing the need for a much wider debate about a card scheme in the context of citizenship and entitlement to public services.

Early the following year, the Home Office White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven* (Home Office, 2002a) was published. This document presented policies on immigration and citizenship within the context of the perceived fading social cohesion which faced some regions of the UK. In this document the idea of a "universal entitlement card" was put forward to "…allow people to prove their identity more easily and provide a simple way to access a range of public services." (Home Office 2002a, p. 82).

Some five months later, the *Entitlement Cards and Identity Fraud* Green Paper (Home Office, 2002b) was published in which a range of applications for a card system were set out, as were the parameters for a period of consultation (for a detailed discussion of this document, see: 6, 2003). This was followed in November 2003 by the White Paper *Identity Cards: the Next Steps* (Home Office, 2003), which confirmed Home Office intentions to introduce the card scheme on a "compulsory" basis for all British residence. Most noticeably, the term "entitlement card" was dropped in favour of "identity cards" (Home Office, 2003). The tone of the discourse surrounding the proposals also began to change around this time, with talk of citizenship and social cohesion giving way to a

greater emphasis on security-oriented concerns. A draft bill was published in April the following year (Home Office, 2004a). This was scrutinised and broadly backed by the Home Affairs Select Committee (HAC, 2004), before the *Identity Cards Bill 2004* was introduced to Parliament on 29th November 2004. After clearing the Commons, the Bill received Second Reading in the House of Lords on 21st March, but was dropped shortly afterwards when Parliament was suspended because of the May 2005 General Election. On securing a third term in office, and with a manifesto which included a commitment to introducing identity cards, the Labour Government submitted a practically identical version of the previous Bill for parliamentary scrutiny on the 25th May. This Bill eventually became law in March 2006.[1]

A further relevant consideration is that over the lifetime of the proposals, the occupant of the position of Home Secretary, as the Secretary of State most closely associated with the scheme, changed three times. From the scheme's inception, through the initial consultation period until the introduction of the first identity cards bill during the 2003-04 parliamentary session, the position of Home Secretary was occupied by David Blunkett MP. Following Blunkett's resignation on 15th December 2004, Rt. Hon. Charles Clarke MP was appointed to the role, and it was under Clarke's stewardship that the *Identity Cards Act 2006* entered into British law on 30 March 2006. Following Clarke's resignation on 5th May, the role of Home Secretary was passed to Rt. Hon. John Reid MP, who served in that position until his return to the backbenches on the 27th June, after stepping down from ministerial office following Gordon Brown's accession to Prime Minister. A time line of significant events is offered below.

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[1] For a full list of changes to the Identity Cards Bill 2005, see Parliamentary Research Paper 05/43 Identity Cards Bill 2005-06 (Ward, 2005).

Table 1.1 Timetable of identity cards policy process

Date	Significant documents and parliamentary stages in the identity cards policy process
Sept 2001	- British govt's response to attacks on US. - Radio statement from Home Secretary ruling out identity cards as part of response.
February 2002	Immigration White Paper mooting 'Entitlement Cards' (Home Office, 2002a).
June 2002	Entitlement Card Green Paper (Home Office, 2002b)
November 2003	Identity Cards White Paper (Home Office, 2003)
December – June 2003-4	Home Affairs Select Committee take evidence on identity cards.
April 2004	Draft Identity Cards Bill and accompanying documents (Home Office, 2004a).
November 2004 – Feb 2005	Identity Cards Bill (2004) debated in Commons.
March 2005	Second Reading in Lords.
April 2005	Parliament dissolved for General Election.
May 2005	Amended Bill presented to Parliament for a second time.
May – October 2005	Identity Cards Bill debated in Commons.
October 2005 – February 2006	Identity Cards Bill debated in Lords.
February – March 2006	Consideration of amendments and parliamentary ping-pong.
30th March 2006	Bill receives Royal Assent.
December 2006	Publication of *Strategic Action Plan* document (Home Office, 2006), signalling significant shift in policy focus.

The proposed administration and operation of the identity cards scheme

Having set out the background context for the scheme, as well as the timeframe of the
proposals, this section of the chapter describes some of the central administrative and
operational ambitions of the identity cards project. This is an important element of the
argument presented in this chapter, because it is my contention that an initial assessment

of these politics suggests that the British Government was strongly committed to the identity cards policy, so it is necessary to make clear to what precisely it was about the policy that the Government was committed.

The *Identity Card Act 2006* laid the foundations for the creation of an official system of registration for all permanent British residents, with a central element of this policy being the establishment of a single official identity for each individual. As we shall see later in this chapter, this marked a departure from the range of sector specific identifiers that have historically been used by the British state to administer public services (Agar, 2003).

Thorough the various policy documents published by the Home Office over this time, it is possible to build up quite a clear picture of the development of thinking about how the scheme was to be structured, as well as its operation. These details are explored later in the thesis in Chapters Four and Five. At this point, a broad overview is sufficient to demonstrate a distinction between different elements of what the Home Office, and after Cabinet agreement, the Government, intended for the scheme.

The cornerstone of the new identity cards system was to be a central database called the National Identity Register (NIR). The NIR was to hold the core personal identity information, including some biometric information[2], of all UK residence, and information from the database was to be used to issue identity cards to individuals. These cards could then be used to confirm identity and authenticate entitlement claims to public goods and services.

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[2] 'Biometrics' comprises methods using physiological or behavioural characteristics to uniquely recognising human beings for identification purposes (Bolle *et al*, 2004; Capoor, 2006).

The authentication or identity verification process was to encompass simple visual checks of an individual's likeness with the image on the card, the checking of a PIN or password or biometric held on the card with the use of a card reader, or an on-line check of information against the central database (Home Office, 2002b).

The *Identity Card Act 2006* stated that the statutory purpose of the establishment of the NIR was to "facilitate… a secure and reliable record of registrable facts about individuals in the United Kingdom", which was to be utilised when deemed to be in the "public interest" (p. 2). This amounted to a list of data items to be included as part of an individual's record on the proposed database. Categories of personal information which are considered to be "registrable facts" in the 2006 Act included:

- identity; which includes:
    - name;
    - previous names;
    - gender;
    - date and place of birth and, if dead, date of death; and
    - external identifying characteristics (this provision included biometrics, but as a concession to a Liberal Democrat amendment, it specifically excluded the collection and storage of DNA data)
- address of principal residence, with the inclusion of;
    - all other addresses in the United Kingdom or elsewhere;
    - the addresses of all previous residences;
    - the times at which these residences were occupied.
- Current residential status, including:
    - nationality;

- o entitlement to remain in the United Kingdom; and

- o the terms and conditions of that entitlement.

- Previous residential statuses held;

- information about other official identification numbers allocated and about the documents to which they relate;

- National Identity Registration Number (NIRN);

- audit information concerning occasions on which information had been shared; and

- any other information recorded in the Register at the holders request.

(Identity Cards Act, 2006, p. 2)

The "public interest" was defined as "…in the interest of national security", for "…the prevention or detection of crime", for the "…enforcement of immigration controls", the "…enforcement of prohibitions on unauthorised working or employment" and for "…securing the efficient and effective provision of public services." (Ibid, p. 2).

Individuals would be enrolled on the database when they applied for particular "designated documents", for example renewing a passport. For applicants who did not already hold a passport, the process was to be somewhat different. It would be required that they attend an enrolment centre, where they would be interviewed, where identity information would be collected, and where their biometric measurements would be taken (Home Office 2008). As the scheme was intended to cover all UK residence, the definition of "an identity card" was drawn widely enough to include any document which recorded registrable facts about an individual which related to information held on the

NIR, including, for example, residence visas for foreign nationals. These types of "designated document" were also to be linked to the NIR for the purpose of "…facilitating the provision of information." (Identity Cards Act 2006, p. 6). The Act also included powers for other documents to be "designated" at a later date (Identity Cards Act, 2006, pp. 4-5). Driving licences had been suggested for inclusion in the scheme earlier in the process (Home Office, 2002b; 2003) but this element of the plan was later dropped.

Many of the stated aspirations for the scheme rested on the assumption of the continued integrity of the data stored on the NIR. It was therefore necessary that the database be constructed in such a way that the information contained within it was accurate, secure, and remained current and useful. Measures to assure these requirements included a system of identity verification to take place when data were first entered into the register. This was to be based on "biographical footprint" checks of information provided by applicants against data held on other databases, including those operated by private sector credit reference agencies (IPS, 2008b). Historical data of this sort could be used to track the lifespan of an identity through records of different activities and transactions over a length of time (Ibid). Similarly, the inclusion of biometrics was another key element of this overarching aim. Biometric measurements of applicants where to be taken and stored on both a microchips on the cards themselves, and on the NIR. The biometrics which most interested the Home Office were individuals' facial images and fingerprints, with iris pattern recognition technology also being considered (UK Border Agency, 2008). When enrolled on the scheme, the biometric measurements of the applicant would be checked against the central register of previously enrolled applicants to ensure that they were not already registered on the system. The aim was that securely held biometric

measurements would be "locked" to a person's official identity, ensuring that individuals would only be able to establish one official identity (UK Border Agency, 2008). In this way, the NIR was to be a "clean" database, created from scratch to avoid importing errors and discrepancies from existing and imperfect government systems.

By 2006, the plan for the development of the NIR had changed. Instead, "…to make best use of existing systems…" biometric, biographical and administrative data items would be stored on separate systems (IPS, 2006). These included the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) Customer Information System (CIS) for biographical information, which was then being used to hold National Insurance Numbers (the NINO). The existing database used by the Identity and Passport Service (IPS) (formerly UKPS) for holding ePassport security information, was to hold identity card security information. Finally, existing biometric storage systems were to be re-used. These included those of the UK Border Agency (UKPA) asylum seeker registration programme, which had its own biometric Applicant Registration Card (ARC), and the biometric visa scheme administered by the United Kingdom Passport Service (UKPS), now the Identity and Passport Service (IPS) (Home Office, 2006).

The Identity Cards Act (2006) also created a new independent regulator role. The "National Identity Scheme Commissioner" was to be charged with overseeing the operation of the card scheme. The legislation also created a series of new criminal and civil offences, included the possession of false identity documents or the apparatus to make such documents, obtaining documents improperly or procuring documents that relate to somebody else where the individual has the intention of "…establishing registrable facts about himself or any other person." (Ibid, p. 24). The relevant documents

included identity cards, passports, driving licenses, immigration documents etc, and the offence carried a maximum custodial sentence of ten years. Regulations were also introduced relating to the operation of the NIR where tampering with the register, unauthorised disclosure and providing false information to the register all carry substantial prison sentences (Identity Cards Act, 2006, p. 25).

The ambition for the identity cards scheme, as set out above, remained fairly constant over the lifetime of the proposals. Until late 2006, the Government's intentions with respect to the means through which its policy objectives were to be achieved were stable.

Justifications for introduction

As has been noted elsewhere, the justifications offered by the Government for the introduction of identity cards were actually quite inconsistent over time (Wills, 2008). The analyses presented in this thesis demonstrate these changes both over time and across different political arenas. A full explanation of the coding process applied to the data to chart these shifts in justification is included in Chapter Three, with the analysis of these data being postponed until the empirical sections in Chapters Four and Five. At this stage, it is sufficient to point out the types of arguments offered by the Home Office over that period. In doing so, it is useful to highlight the form of the "object" of commitment i.e. that to which one is committed, pursued by the Home Office and the Government over this time.

One argument appealed to by the Government for introducing identity cards was that they would be an important component in fighting identity fraud. This was considered to be a serious issue which was said to cost the British economy £1.3 billions per year (Cabinet Office 2002). This figure was later revised and increased to £1.7 billions per year (BBC, 2006). By "securing" our identities, the cards would help to address this kind of financial frauds (Home Office, 2002b; 2003; 2004a; 2005a). Similarly, tackling other types of crime associated with using false and multiple identities were at different times linked to the strategic objectives of the scheme, including prevention of international terrorism, and serious and organised crimes (Home Office, 2004a, 2004b; 2005a).

At other times, the justification most strongly appealed to was the potential offered by identity cards to address the perceived problems of illegal immigration, and what the Government chose to represent as the closely related issue of illegal working. By ensuring that free public services would only be available to those who were "entitled" to them, identity cards would have an impact upon the "pull factor" attracting illegal migrants to visit and illegally stay and/or work in the UK (see for e.g. Home Office 2002a; 2002b; 2003; 2004a; 2005a).

The contrast between the consistency of the stated technological specifications and functional aspirations for the scheme, and the shifting justifications offered by the Government presents an interesting problem. The reconciliation of these two different strands of the Governments orientation towards the identity cards policy is clearly an issue with which this thesis must grapple if the claims for the Government's commitment to the policy are to be sustained. This is because it is quite possible to point to the lack of a clear and consistent justification as evidence of a lack of commitment. This thesis will

therefore demonstrate how this concept of commitment can allow for the possibility of the "object" of commitment being understood in two distinct ways. As will be shown in more detail later in the thesis, an actor might show herself or perhaps themselves to be committed to a particular set of "means", understood as a specific measure, an instrument of some kind, even a whole programme, and that this commitment extended over time. Importantly, this does not, however, imply that an actor must be committed for the whole of that period to any one rationale, justification, goal, or set of "ends". By making a distinction between the "means" to which government is committed, and the "ends" that its commitment seeks to bring about, the analysis is better equipped to distinguish between what might appear on the surface to be incompatible, or inconsistent, ambitions.

Opposition faced by Government

This section of the chapter continues with the task of making the argument that the identity cards case study is suitable for the concept formation exercise which concerns this thesis. It shows how the Government was forced to endure high costs as it continued with its stated policy aims. This is relevant as the issues of continuation in the face of resistance and raising costs will be important in the subsequent analysis.

The Labour Government's proposals for the introduction of an identity card scheme formed one of the more high profile aspects of its legislative programme, but the wide ranging interest attracted by the proposal was far from universally positive. The policy generated substantial controversy after being first mooted by then Home Secretary David Blunkett, following the events of 11th September 2001 in the US.

Within Parliament the Government faced sustained opposition towards the identity scheme. The pattern of this opposition, however, varied over time. Although the Conservative Party were initially officially neutral toward the idea, this soon changed to a position of principled opposition, particularly from the more libertarian right wing of the party (BBC News 2004). The Conservatives sought to reject the introduction of the cards on the basis of perceived infringements of civil liberties, and costs. The Conservatives also sought to make links between high profile data losses from government departments and the potential for similar losses of personal data from the proposed NIR. The Conservatives also took the step in 2007 of promising to scrap the scheme, including any contracts issued by the Labour Government, should they win the 2010 General Election (Morris, 2007). The Liberal Democrats maintained a consistent opposed position throughout the progress of the policy, arguing that the cards were "deeply flawed" and a waste of money (BBC, 2004).

The Labour Government also had to face down a series of backbench revolts over the scheme, on both occasions when the legislation was introduced. By far the most significant was during the Second and Third Readings of the 2005 Bill, which later became the *Identity Cards Act 2006*. Labour backbenchers rebelled in significant numbers on votes relating to the compulsory link between obtaining a passport and entry onto the NIR. This represented the ninth largest Second Reading rebellion by Labour backbenchers since Labour came to power in 1997 (Cowley, 2005a).

The scheme was also the subject of a number of select committee investigations, with the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR), the Lords Select Committee on the

Constitution and the Science and Technology Committee all publishing critical reports. All of these critiques of the Government's plans were well reported in the press.

A continual aspect of the debate was the issue of costs, and the accuracy of the Government's projections about the overall level of expenditure required before the scheme could be successfully implemented. The initial 2002 consultation document stated a cost of £30 millions to establish the NIR. This increased to £107 millions when the necessary links to organisations for verifying biographical information were included (Home Office, 2002b). A further update of thinking on the anticipated costs was provided in the publication of the *Identity Cards Bill 2004*. This saw an £85 millions per annum as an average over ten years, as running cost, for the new register as well as an average of £50 millions over the same period for the verification service. These figures were revised again for the publication of the May 2005 Bill to account for 2005-06 prices with £584 millions being suggested as the basic cost, with additional costs anticipated as the incremental establishment (and as yet unaccounted for costs) of the technological infrastructure took place. A "unit cost" of the combined passport/identity card was suggested at eighty five pounds in November 2004. However, following the Identity Cards Bill's (2005-06) reintroduction in May 2005, this figure increased to ninety five pounds.

The issue of costs was enlivened by the publication of the London School of Economics' (LSE) *Identity Project* (2005) report, which coincided with the Second Reading of the *Identity Cards Bill 2005*. Through an analysis of the available documentation, the report attempted to provide a comprehensive review of the substantive technical and operational details of the scheme, as well as some of the functional aspirations. The report presented

a highly critical account of the Government's proposals, rejecting many of its technical assumptions, and calling into question the underlying rationale for introduction. The report argued that the Government's identity cards project was "…too complex, technically unsafe, overly prescriptive and lacks a foundation of public trust and confidence." (LSE, 2005, p. 5).

Although the issue of costs was raised in the Commons from November 2004 onward, the publication of the LSE's report seems to propel these concerns to the centre of the debate, both in Parliament and in the press. The LSE report estimated likely costs for the scheme to be between £10.6 billions and £19.2 billions (LSE, 2005, pp. 241-245). This contrasted sharply with the £5.4 billions offered in Home Office documentation (Home Office, 2006). The result was a long and protracted dispute between government spokespeople and a group of academics at the LSE (Freeman, 2005), which was well reported in the media.

Criticism of the scheme was not confined to Parliament or to academia. Throughout the legislative process, the Information Commissioner as the official regulator of this area of policy, vocally positioned himself against some of the data collection and retention elements of the scheme. Commenting on the legislation, the Information Commissioner asserted that certain of its elements were "…an unnecessary and disproportionate intrusion into individuals' privacy…" that were "…not easily reconciled with fundamental data protection safeguards." (Thomas, 2005b, p. 3).

The identity card proposals also attracted the attention of a range of campaign groups who positioned themselves against the introduction of the scheme. In particular, the civil and

human rights organisation, Liberty, argued that the Government had not adequately justified the proposed identity card scheme, and claimed that its introduction would adversely affect many vulnerable groups in society, and risk increasing discrimination (Liberty, 2003). Similarly, the privacy campaign group, NO2ID was highly critical of both the Government and the identity cards proposals. Enjoying wide access to the print media, NO2ID provided a running critique of each government decision, and sought to highlight both the civil liberties and the costs arguments against introduction of the scheme. However, despite this broad base of opposition, the Labour Government persisted with the policy, claiming popular public support and remaining steadfast in its ambition to see legislation produced.

The Labour Government's stance towards the introduction of the identity cards policy remained in place until the May 2010 General Election, which was lost. The newly formed Coalition Government soon announced plans to abolish the National Identity Register (BBC News, 2010). This policy was included in the Queens Speech on 25th May 2010, with the *Identity Documents Act 2010* which repealed the former Labour Government's policy, becoming law on 21st January 2011.

International context

This section of this chapter describes the international environment within which contemporary British identity card policy was developed. In doing so, it asks the questions of the degree to which the introduction of identity card schemes was a common phenomenon in the early Twenty First Century, and if so, what are the implications for our understanding of the politics of British identity cards in terms of our understanding of

the British Government's commitment to the policy? This discussion is offered to provide important contextual information, and to help understand the politics of the British case that will be dealt with later in this thesis.

Until relatively recently Britain was fairly unique in Europe for its lack of an identity cards scheme or population wide system of citizen registration. With the exception of Ireland, Denmark, Lithuania and Latvia, the majority of European countries operate some form of identity cards scheme, often in conjunction with a national register or a state-issued personal number. Indeed, some states are able to boast of a very long history of official identity document usage (Caplan and Torpey, 2001).

Around the turn of the century, many countries around the world with legacy identity systems sought to transform these often paper based schemes into electronic ones, capable of supporting a wider range of public service functions (for comparative data and analysis of this phenomenon, see Home Office, 2002, pp. 86–93; LSE, 2005, pp. 59-110). Interestingly, a number of countries such as Australia and the UK, which had traditionally rejected this type of scheme, showed their willingness to reconsider their long held negative stance (LSE, 2005, pp. 45-6).

The broad international shift towards states re-examining their use of identity documents was given a greater impetus by changes in the conditions of the United States *Visa Waiver Programme* (VWP[3]). This programme enables nationals of certain states to enter the US

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[3] There are currently 36 countries currently participating in the VWP. These are Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom (Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2010).

for business or tourism without a visa for up to ninety days. The changes came about as a result of the *Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act* (2002), passed by the US in the wake of the attack of September 11th 2001. The Act stipulated that a condition of continued participation in the VWP was that member countries agree to a number of security and data sharing practises proposed by the US Government. In addition, states were asked to commit to the introduction of biometric travel documents (LSE, 2005). Around the same time, the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), a United Nations level body which deals with international air travel, also issued directives on passport harmonisation which sought to standardise travel documentation. In 2003, the ICAO endorsed the use of digitally stored facial images as a primary identifier, as well as the option of digitally stored fingerprint and/or iris scans, embedded on a chip within passports (ICAO, 2003). Both of these factors were pointed to by the British Government as key imperatives for the introduction of modern, biometrically enabled British travel documentation (see: Home Office 2002b; 2003; 2004 etc).

At a European level, increasing interest was shown towards the electronic management of state issued personal identities. For example, the fingerprints of prospective asylum seekers began to be held on a European wide database 'EURODAC', to aid in the development of a common asylum policy across EU member states (Europa, 2008). Similarly, European Council Regulation on standards for security features in biometric passports and travel documents, adopted on 13 December 2004, stated that Member States must comply with ICAO requirements concerning Radio-Frequency Identification (RFID) chips and facial images (EU Council Regulation, No 225, 2004).

Viewed in this context, the Labour Government's proposals for a compulsory identity card scheme fit well into the broader international trend, with imperatives driven by both the EU and the US' foreign policy stance. However, as the London School of Economics' *Identity Project* points out, the British Government's schemes went far beyond the specific requirements stipulated by the ICAO and the US Government (LSE, 2005, p. 51). For example, the collection and storage of citizen's fingerprint biometrics, a preferred option for the British Government scheme, was not required by either the US or the ICAO's specifications for travel documents. This suggests that other factors might have driven the development of the identity cards policy and the Government's willingness to persevere in the face of domestic opposition. The timeline of Government decisions also undermines this reading of events, with plans for the introduction of an ICOA compliant passport card predating Home Office announcements about the introduction of identity cards (UKPA, 2001). Although providing an explanation for the questions of policy development is outside of the scope of this thesis, this information is worth considering, and points to areas for future research.

British identity cards in historical context

This section of the chapter aims to place the identity cards debate in its historical context. It attempts to add to the argument that this case in particular offers a useful testing ground for the development of a concept, and for the analysis of the success of the operational and measurement procedures suggested for the definition. The central point is that unlike in continental Europe, the renewed interest in an identity cards scheme represents a striking historical discontinuity in UK public policy. This shift in policy stance makes the

fact of the Government's commitment all the more surprising. In addition, it also helps to explain a portion of the resistance and the rising costs faced by Government as it sought to formulate the policy. This is a relevant point for the forthcoming analysis, as the question of what commitment means in the face of institutionalised resistance and rising costs will be shown to be important.

Identity cards are not a completely new notion to British politics. Similar schemes have operated in Britain twice before during the twentieth century, throughout both of the World Wars. The first of these was introduced via the National Registration Act 1915. Its primary function was to help improve the quality of existing official statistics, so that the number of individuals available for conscription could be more reliably established (Agar, 2001; Higgs, 2003; Scott, 2008). The Act legislated for the creation of a paper based population register containing the details of all individuals between fifteen and sixty five years old throughout the United Kingdom. Once entered on the register, individuals where presented with a "certificate of registration" which contained their personal details. After the Act was amended in 1918, individuals were required to produce this certificate at the request of the police or other authorised persons. Historical accounts of this identity cards programme suggest that despite the Government's best efforts, it quickly fell out of use, with individuals losing their documents or failing to update their personal information. The result was that the scheme was officially disbanded at the end of the war in 1919 (Agar, 2001; 2005).

A second identity cards scheme operated as a wartime measure in Britain from 1939 until the end of most food rationing in 1952. Importantly, the cards were linked to the issuing of ration books which provided the incentive for individuals to update their personal

information on a regular basis. This ensured that official records of personal information were current and up-to-date, and therefore of far greater use of the Government for various administrative functions. It was this link which insured the scheme's longevity and success (Agar, 2001; 2005).

It was not until 1952 the Conservative Government of Winston Churchill ended national registration (Dovey, 1986).[4] By this time the cards had come to be viewed as both 'un-British' and an unnecessary threat to civil liberties (Agar, 2001). Although the identity cards scheme was dismantled, the identity number continued for some time as a central index for the National Health Service (Dovey, 1986). However, this number has since been superseded.

Although National Registration ended in the 1950s, the issue of identity cards has never quite gone away, with the idea often being mooted in parliamentary debates. However, successive governments have seemed reluctant to consider introducing such a scheme. A clear change in this stance occurred when the Conservative Government, under the leadership of John Major, published a Green Paper on the possibility of introducing a voluntary identity card (Home Office, 1995). The Home Affairs Select Committee examined the proposals and published a report which was broadly in favour of some type of voluntary card scheme complete with a new central register, although not a universal identifier (Home Affairs Committee, 1996). Later that year, the Government announced its intention to introduce a voluntary identity card to aid the process of administering public services as well as reducing some types of fraud and minor crimes. These proposals were included in the 1997 Conservative Manifesto which argued that the cards

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[4] A number of detailed historical accounts of war time British identity cards schemes are available. See for example: Dovey, 1986; Agar, 2001, 2005; Higgs, 2003; Thomson 2008.

would amongst other things "…make a contribution to safer communities." (Conservative Party, 1997, para 7). However, their introduction was halted by the Conservative Party's defeat in the 1997 General Election.

Following the Labour Party's 1997 General Election victory, the Government under Prime Minister Blair seemed uninterested in an identity management scheme. An ideas about photo card driving licenses was mooted, and the then Home Secretary showed himself to be open to the idea of a voluntary scheme providing there was no compulsory element, but no such scheme was mentioned in the Labour Party 2001 election manifesto (Jones, 2001).

Despite a lack of government interest, the Home Affairs Select Committee still seemed to be keen on the idea of national registration. On 23rd January 2001 the HAC published a report calling for the Government to examine the "pull factors" which attract people to the UK, and for a debate about immigration policy. Among its conclusions, the committee advocated a fundamental review across all departments of "…the case for and against the introduction of an entitlement card system" (Ibid). The reply from the Government was clear yet unenthusiastic, stating that it "…remained unpersuaded that there would be benefits in a review of this kind.". For the Government at this point, identity cards remained technically too complex, too expensive, and the issue of public acceptability remained a major concern (Home Affairs Select Committee, 2001).

Elsewhere, the Government's ambivalence towards identity cards was echoed by the view taken by Andrew Pinder, the Government's eEnvoy, who was charged with enabling the "joining-up" of service provision and ensuring that services were available online. Pinder

took a similarly sceptical view, publicly voiced a preference for digital certification as the best way to speed up the adoption of online government, whilst explicitly rejecting identity cards for that purpose (Computing, July 2001).

The position of successive governments towards introducing identity cards scheme has been at best ambivalent. Even the Conservative Government, whose proposals progressed the furthest, were not willing to consider the possibility of imposing full compulsion on the population. Similarly, the argument set out above makes clear that the New Labour Government elected in 1997 was equally sceptical, as late as spring 2001, as the Government's response to the Home Affairs Select Committee showed (Home Office, 2001). Clearly, however, by summer 2002 this view had changed. Given this context, the strength with which the Government pursued the introduction of identity cards is therefore all the more surprising.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented important empirical background information on the case study that will be used to undertake the concept formation work, and the operationalisation of the concept of political commitment in the remainder of this thesis. It has also provided a rationale for the selection of the case.

On the basis of an initial assessment of evidence, some of which has been presented in this chapter, the case study has been chosen as one which exemplifies "strong" commitment. This commitment was sustained over a period of several years, from green through to white papers, from draft bill considered in a select committee to full

legislation, and on through to early implementation. Indeed, the process only came to a close with the fall of the Labour Government after the 2010 General Election. As is shown, "commitment" was achieved against the background of several decades of British politics during which identity card schemes were regarded with suspicion, and when even policy makers who were sympathetic to the aims of such schemes were unsure about the public's acceptance of them. Moreover, the chapter set out how the Government maintained its commitment to the scheme against rising opposition from pressure groups, an influential regulator, from critics in the national press, and against a series of revolts from its own backbenchers at critical stages in the passage of the legislation.

Given the argument presented in this chapter, the Labour Government's identity card scheme is a suitable case study for developing the concept of political commitment, and for specifying operational measures. In particular, it provides a range of interesting empirical phenomena. For example, the Government appeared committed to the technical design and the administrative infrastructure of the scheme, or the "means" by which identity would be managed, even though at different time it sought to privilege different rationales, goals or "ends". This is a phenomenon of some interest that any developed concept of political commitment should be capable of handling. Secondly, the Labour Government's commitment to the project was maintained despite facing strong countervailing pressure against the introduction of such a scheme. Government continued in the face of (i) increasing criticism from many different sources including the press, pressure groups and industry professionals; (ii) against rising political costs, (iii) in the face of rising projected direct financial costs; (iv) against criticism based on deeply ingrained institutional constraints. These included existing statutes such as the government's own Data Protection Act of 1998, as well as civil liberties concerns

grounded in the European Convention on Human Rights. A well-developed concept of political commitment needs to be capable of encompassing in a precise way, what it means to be resolved to maintaining a political position in the face of rising costs and a set of diverse risks.

As was suggested earlier in the chapter, a straightforward rational choice conception of commitment is inadequate as it would hold that commitment is simply the result of a calculation of the likely future private benefits, less costs, to a government of proceeding with a policy measure. Despite clearly finding it very difficult to estimate in advance what the particular costs and benefits associated with the scheme might be, the Labour Government remained committed. The stated rationales for its introduction shifted frequently, and quantitative assessments of benefits were often unstable. Political costs also increased significantly over time, as opposition mounted. A more sophisticated rational choice conception of political commitment could be constructed, which allowed for lack of information, and for very heavy weighting on certain kinds of cost, but even then, this would struggle to deal with commitment to a means that is more stable and more central than commitment to any particular set of ends or goals to be achieved. Similarly, treating commitment as a measure of "resolve" (Bueno de Mesquita, 2009) only defers the problem of definition and operationalisation, without actually solving it. Finally, the argument presented in this chapter has shown that a network approach to the analysis of the Labour Government's does not offer a compelling account of how the policy was sustained in the face of significant risk, and unknown costs. More work is therefore required to specify a concept of political commitment which can handle cases of strong commitment which exhibit some of the features that this case shows.

Chapter Two follows. It considers the approaches adopted towards commitment in several bodies of literature and shows that fewer than might be expected are found in the field of political science. From these approaches to commitment and through deductive inference, a list, comprised of eight features is derived. All of the eight, it is argued, must be incorporated in any serviceable concept. These eight features, or "limbs", are organised into a definition, with an emphasis on showing a clear relationship between each of its composite parts. Later in the thesis, in Chapter Three, operational measures are derived for each of the limbs of the definition, and are specified for different political spheres, or "arenas", such as those of parliamentary and executive action. In Chapters Four and Five, the feasibility of using those operational measures is empirically examined against the case of the Labour Government's identity card scheme. These chapters are used to measure commitment along a number of different dimensions, including (i) the extent of the Government's commitment; (ii) how and when its commitment changed; (iii) to what precisely it was committed; and (iv) what that commitment consisted of, at the level of fundamental relations with costs, benefits, other actors in the political process, etc. The findings are then compared and synthesised in Chapter Six, in what will be presented as a serious candidate for a more general concept of political commitment that can be used in future empirical research.

Chapter Two – Political Commitment

In the previous chapter, I made the case that the concept of political commitment is one which warrants much more attention that it has until now received, both because of its relevance for addressing a range of important empirical questions, and because of the new research agenda it implies. I also argued that proper attention to concept formation must be the starting point of such research, if one is to provide a robust and methodologically rigorous foundation for future work. The identity cards policy of the Blair Labour Government was offered as a particularly suitable case for the full exploration of the concept, both because of its considerable intrinsic interest, and its suitability on methodological grounds as an example of "extreme" political commitment.

This chapter begins by presenting the findings of a comprehensive literature review. This was conducted to produce a theoretically robust initial definition of the concept "political commitment" to later be refined and developed over the course of the thesis. This definition is shown to consist of eight different but interrelated "limbs". Each limb, together with the literature from which it was drawn, is presented below. Special attention is given to mapping the nature of the relationship(s) between each of the limbs, so that by the end of the chapter we are left with both a definition, and a clear picture of the

structure of the concept of political commitment. This chapter is therefore centrally concerned with the process of concept formation. As was discussed in Chapter One, concept formation is a vitally important step to take given the current state of knowledge, if one wishes to have confidence in the inferences one draws from data to conclusions in future empirical research about political commitment. The operationalisation of this concept, the specification of measures for each of the limbs, and its empirical testing are challenges which are explored fully in later chapters.

The concept of commitment – a strategy for concept formation

Commitment is a familiar concept in its everyday usage, and so intuitively, a useful place to begin this chapter is by specifying some of the common everyday uses of the term. This is what the methodologist Gerring (2009) calls an "ordinary language approach" to concept formation. Commitment is often thus described as a willingness to "…give your time and energy to something that you believe in, or a promise or firm decision to do something." (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2009). Similarly, commitment is sometimes associated with "[t]he state or quality of being dedicated to a cause or activity…", or "[a] pledge or undertaking." (OED, 2005). Elsewhere, a Google search of the term "define: commitment" yields similar results. Being committed suggests, for example, the trait of "resolution" and "fixity of purpose" or the act of "binding yourself" to a course of action. A cursory inspection of these various dictionary definitions does suggest a broad similarity between them. Most often, the term relates to a situation whereby an "actor" holds a particular orientation towards an "object". The noun "commitment" describes the

nature of the relationship between actor and object, and that this relationship is enduring, or extends over time. Beyond this, little more can be said at this stage.

The "ordinary language" approach clearly offers some useful pointers for this thesis. As we shall see later in this chapter, the core of the word's meaning identified by this strategy is closely reflected in the uses of the concept in a good proportion of the social science literature. Clearly this exercise has been of some value. However, a lexicographical approach to definitions or to concept formation more generally, is on its own not adequate. As Gerring (1999) points out, most key social science concepts are multivalent, so the vagaries of a dictionary definition might disguise a range of subtly different connotations. The issue is further complicated by differences in linguistic usage (the use of the same term in the different grammatical forms of nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.), and changes in meaning over time and between places (Gerring, 1999). In general, the diversity of usage implied by ordinary language uses of terms is a strong argument against their being directly imported into a piece of social research. Importantly, relying on dictionary definitions and everyday meaning alone leaves the concept underdeveloped. Empirical research based on such concepts would therefore be prone to the sorts of methodological challenges to its conceptual foundations that this thesis has been developed to address. Just as importantly, dictionary definitions are not offered for the same reasons as definitions in the social sciences. A key aim for scholars undertaking the process of concept formation is to enable operationalisation and measurement of concepts for use in empirical research, and to enable us to distinguish differences between meanings in different theories, perhaps from different research traditions (6 and Bellamy, 2011). An alternative strategy for arriving at an operationalisable definition is clearly required.

A more systematic approach is offered by the literature on concept formation. Concept formation is a sub-discipline of social science methodology which deals with the specification of the meanings and structure of concepts to be used in empirical research. For those concepts that lend themselves to it, the traditional strategy is to provide a clear definition, stating the "connotation", "intension", or distinguishing attributes of that concept. By setting out the nature of the concept, this approach to concept formation has the advantage of offering a clear framework against which the researcher can go on to derive a set of operational measures, from which they can determine which cases do and which do not fall under the concept in question. The set of those cases which conform to these attributes are known as the "denotation" (Mill, 1996) or "extension" (Sartori, 1970).

The intension and the extension of a concept are inversely related to each other, so that with greater specificity or an increase in the intension, the extension of the concept, or the number of things to which it relates is reduced. The converse is also true, so that if one wished to broaden the concept's extension, its intension must correspondingly decrease. The failure to recognise the inverse relationship between intension and extension leads to the "stretching" of concepts, whereby they lose their discriminating power, and their definitional precision, and so too their usefulness for empirical research (Sartori, 1970). Of central importance for a well-formed concept that can be used in empirical research, is that it strikes an appropriate balance between these two opposing risks.

With this in mind, it is worth considering some of the different types of concepts sometimes discussed in the methodological literature. For example, a "classical concept" is one that has a set of necessary conditions which a case must meet to count as an

example of that concept, and perhaps some additional conditions, each or all of which might be sufficient. This kind of concept has the virtue of clarity, and the departure from it is what Sartori (1970) had in mind when discussing concept stretching. The sharp delineation of the borders of classical concepts makes the task of distinguishing between empirical cases, which either do or do not conform to the necessary and sufficient criteria, a relatively straightforward one. An example of this type of concept is given in Lochner et al (1999) measurement paper on social capital. The authors suggest a composite definition of the term which, they argue consists in a combination of four overlapping, but necessary, elements. These elements are "collective efficacy", "psychological sense of community", "neighbourhood cohesion" and "community competence", which the authors argue can be operationalised in a number of different ways. Each of these elements are individually necessary, and when taken together, jointly sufficient. The boundaries of the concept are thus clearly defined.

Conversely, it is precisely because of the virtue of clarity that classical concepts also run the risk of excessive narrowness in terms of an inadequate number of attributes for the research purpose for which the concept is utilised. For example, the concept of "intelligence" in much psychometric research and I.Q testing is sometimes accused of being too restrictive because it focuses on only cognate functions. In doing so, it ignores other aspects of human ability or intelligence such as the "emotional intelligence" associated with those capable of profound empathy, or the "kinetic intelligence" associated with the deep and intuitive understanding of one's own physicality that is required by world class athletes (Gardner, 1993). Under a definition with too few attributes, the term intelligence can actually limit our understanding by failing to incorporate important wider skills or talents.

One type of concept that is often cited as having a much wider application is what is called a "family resemblance" concept (Wittgenstein, 1973). The standard example put forward in methodological texts is that of a "game". Each kind of game resembles some others, just as family members resemble one or two others in that family. Unlike a classical concept, there is no single feature that all games must possess, and so games are identifiable through reference to a series of overlapping similarities meaning that a wide range of criteria might therefore be sufficient. If we accept this view, then the strict necessary/sufficient rules of classical concepts should be relaxed. However, as useful as these concepts can sometimes be, they do not provide clear measures for the concept's operationalisation.

Notwithstanding the ambitions of this piece of research, the decision about conceptual structure must to a large extent rest on a theory of the relationship between the component parts of the concept in which we are interested (Goertz, 2006), and so an attempt at a "classical" structuring of the concept addressed in this thesis would need to be abandoned if no coherent strategy for its retention could be found. However, as is discussed later in this chapter, it was possible to retain such a classical structure for the concept of political commitment.

Commitment in the social sciences: presentation of a definition and a review of the literatures

The process of concept formation in this chapter rests on a comprehensive analysis of a range of different literatures relevant to commitment, from across the social sciences. As was discussed in the previous chapter, with a few exceptions, "commitment" as a category of political action has not really interested political science. Useful insights are offered by the credible commitment literature (discussed later in this chapter), but the very particular understanding of commitment it expounds is much too restricted to warrant its wholesale application to this thesis. It was therefore necessary to conduct a broader search of the literature from across the social sciences before the concept could be adequately set out. By identifying the differences and similarities in the ways that the term "commitment" is used in a range of literatures, a comprehensive definition is constructed, emphasising a range of different characteristics which are shown to be necessary or sufficient to operationalise the concept fully. The utility of the concept is then tested in the empirical case which follows in Chapter Four and Five.

Rather than setting out a traditional review of each of the bodies of literature from which the definition was drawn (such as game theory, social psychology, human resources and employee relations, historical sociology etc.), the chapter proceeds by first offering the eight limbed definition of commitment, and then presenting the different strands in turn to show how each captures an important dimension of the concept. The rationale behind this approach is partly driven by a pragmatic desire for brevity, and there seems to be little benefit to setting out in great detail the positions of some seven social science disciplines towards the notion of commitment. In addition, approaching the theoretical framework from the perspective of a definition presents a useful organisational principle for this

chapter and for much of the analysis in the rest of the thesis. Finally, and most importantly, the approach ensures that the analysis remains closely focused at the level of concept formation. This is crucially important because it is the process of the specification, operationalisation, and measurement, together with the empirical testing of political commitment as a new concept which is the original contribution to knowledge of this thesis.

Political commitment - a definition

The definition of political commitment offered here is comprised of eight different limbs. It describes a state whereby an actor, who intends a particular objective, and who has the necessary capacity to pursue that objective, is willing to put their assets to hazard, over time, and in the face of escalating costs, so that it can be achieved. A number of strategies are available to actors in their commitment to achieve an objective. These include binding oneself to a particular objective to prevent weaknesses of the will, so that one's interests are aligned with seeing an outcome occur, or else through convincing others of one's intentions towards an objective to encourage cooperative behaviour. Finally, a firm indicator of commitment is that a committed actor tends to treat "sunk costs" as not being sunk, allowing them to influence their future decisions. Although this definition is relatively complex, it is also quite specific. Each of the eight limbs of the definition of commitment, and the structure of the concept are analysed in some length later in this chapter. However, this chapter first proceeds by examining the foundations of the eight limbs of the definition in turn.

1. Intention

The notion of "intention" is important for a number of different literatures which deal with commitment, and it is the first characteristic or attribute of commitment included in the definition. Intention is of particular interest to social psychologists, and in the applied field of organisational studies. Most often, scholars writing from an organisational behaviour perspective tend to understand commitment in narrowly defined terms, as a description of the link or bond between an employee and an organisation. Studies in this area generally take the form of an analysis of employees' psychological or behavioural attachment to an organisation, often operationalised as an intention to remain in membership of that organisation. Often, this research is focused on the identification of management strategies which might actively encourage such attachment (Korgaard et al, 1995; Meyer and Allen, 1991; 1992; O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986).

Theoretical disputes characterise this field. Both the specific nature of the concept of commitment, as well as the manner in which it should be applied to organisations, are subjects of much debate (see Brown, 1996 for a summary). Mowday, et al (1982) offer a useful review of the organisational commitment literature, and on that basis, define commitment as a strong and positive attitude towards an organisation, coupled with the behavioural intentions to work for, and remain in, that organisation. Similarly, other authors view commitment as "an affective response (attitude or orientation) resulting from an evaluation of the work situation which links or attaches the individual to the organization" (Mottaz, 1989, p. 144). Elsewhere, commitment is "a mind-set" whereby "…individuals consider the extent to which their own values and goals are congruent with those of the organisation." (Mowday et al, 1982, p. 26). Commitment understood in this way is seen as a force which binds an actor to an entity (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001).

The work of Mowday and Steers (1979) argues that many definitions conflate two separate issues. On their view, a distinction should be drawn between "attitudinal" and "behavioural" commitment, as two separate types of commitment. Attitudinal commitment focuses on the way in which individuals come to think (positively) about their relationship with an organisation (Mowday et al, 1982), By contrast, "behavioural commitment" focuses on an individual's actions towards an organisation, including "compliance" or "acceptance of influence" in behaviour. However, the fundamental distinction between the "behavioural" and "attitudinal" approaches to the concept is essentially a difference in its object i.e. to what is being committed. Whereas attitudinal studies emphasise particular (organisational) entities as the object, behavioural approaches emphasise commitment to courses of action or behaviours (Meyer and Hercovitch, 2001). It is an actor's orientation towards an "object" - e.g. a policy outcome- which is the strand of organisational commitment of interest to this thesis because it focuses attention on the object of commitment as a significant component of an actor's intention.

A number of academics in the field of development studies have been convinced of the usefulness of commitment for their own work, particularly in the context of the role of "selectivity" in international aid. Selectivity means that aid is allocated on the basis of the donor's assessments of the recipient's commitment to programmes or policies which are the condition for the aid. In this context, commitment offers one criterion against which to assess the potential for a policy's success.

The view of commitment in the organisational studies literature is a close reflection of Morrissey's (1995) more general understanding of the term in development studies. His research on Tanzanian tax policy reform suggests that the "degree of commitment" shown by a governments to a programme of reform plays an important role in determining the "reform potential" of different "policy environments" (ibid, p. 639). Here, commitment is used to describe a positive orientation adopted by an actor (in this case, a government) towards an outcome (achieving policy change).

Similarly, McCourt's (2003) account of civil service reform in Swaziland reflects the central thrust of Morrissey's (1995) usage of the term commitment. He defines commitment as "…a behavioural intention which predicts whether a government will implement a policy proposal or not." (p. 1018). Although it is debatable that intentions can realistically be viewed as predictors of behaviour as Morrissey suggests, the point remains that for these writers, a central component of being committed is a positive behavioural or attitudinal intention towards an object.

McCourt's work goes as far as to offer a series of indicators by which we might identify the adoption of a committed orientation, including "statements" made by an actor that are (i) voluntary, (ii) explicit, (iii) challenging, (iv) public, and (v) irrevocable. Whilst these indicators might be appropriate for the specific empirical context McCourt had in mind, they are too restrictive for the current purpose, especially in relation to a government's commitments to policy. McCourt (2003) might therefore be better understood as having described a special case of commitment, For example, a great many areas of policy to which government might commit are not open to public scrutiny, such as defence or

foreign policy decisions, and yet we would still want them to be captured by this concept of commitment.

The issue of the nature of intention has been dealt with in some detail in the field of analytical philosophy, and McCourt's (2003) usage of the terms comes quite close to the more formal understanding of intention we find in this field as "an intention to do" (Anscombe, 1957). For Anscombe, intention is identified as the purpose of performing an action under a description. The famous example given is that of an individual who moves their arm up and down whilst holding a handle of a water pump. This action is intentional under the description of "pumping water", but not under the description of "contracting these muscles". Although the person is clearly also contracting her muscles, this is a description of the action, not the intention. Intention must therefore be purposeful, and understood as distinct from the consequences of actions. This is the idea of "intensionality". As Driver (2009) makes clear, intentions rely on reasons, and not evidence, as the source of their justification. If we do something without intending to do it, or do something under constraints that are so severe that we have little choice but to do it, we can hardly be said to be committed in the sense discussed in this thesis.

As highlighted by the discussion of commitment in organisational studies, commitment is at least in part comprised of an intention toward an object, and that this intention must logically precede a course of action. Similarly, the object to which one is committed might well be multifaceted, involving both behaviours and intentions. Finally, the literature reviewed above also showed that intentions must be understood as separate from the consequences of one's actions, and that one's intention towards an object must be purposeful.

2. Capacity

The second limb of commitment included in this definition is "capacity". The issue of capacity occupies both Morrissey (1995), and McCourt (2003) who argue that without it, actors cannot make good on their intentions. In the absence of capacity, intentions are likely to be limited to aspirations about preferences for future behaviour, or about future intended outcomes. It is capacity which allows an actor to make efforts to realise their commitments, or which equips them to bring about "commitment proper" (McCourt, 2003). Commitment means more than an aspiration or an orientation towards a particular outcome. It also implies the means by which one's intention might be pursued. Capacity is therefore the ability to pursue the object of one's intentions. If one does not have the capacity to go after the object of one's intentions, then it doesn't follow to describe their state as being one of commitment.

The literature on British politics deals with the issue of the "capacity" of a government to act to achieve control over outcomes. However, capacity to influence outcomes is not of direct importance for this discussion. Rather, what is important for understanding commitment is the ability to pursue the object of one's intentions. It is by implication therefore that this literature is relevant to our understanding of governments acting with commitment. For example, Hood (1983) and Hood and Margetts (2007) utilise the idea of a "resource" to elucidate the process by which governments use capacity to influence outcomes. The "tools of government" approach argues that the uses of particular configurations of certain resources are what provide governments with the specific "capability" to affect change in a given circumstance. Capabilities, in Hood's usage of the term, refer to the skills, strategies or abilities in the use of resources to achieve specific

goal. This is distinct from his definition of resources, which are described as those things on which governments draw to achieve ends.

In Hood's (1983) "NATO" scheme of what he describes as a governmental "tool-kit", a typology of four varieties of resource are put forward. These resources are sometimes intangible, as is the case with respect to "nodality", understood as the quality of being embedded within an informational or social network, and "authority", or the possession of legal or official (legitimate) power. At other times, the resources specified by Hood are more obviously tangible. "Treasure", understood as money and property, is put forward here. Finally, the resource of "organisation", which is offered as an element of Hood's toolkit, and which is understood as a stock of people or skills, equipment etc., is both tangible and intangible.

Some of the "tools" described by Hood (1983) are characterised as being "depletable" whereas others have "self-renewing" potential. For example, "treasure" and "organisation" are "immanent" resources because unless they are replenished, they will run out. By contrast, "nodality" and "authority" are "contingent" resources, because the level of their depletion is contingent on circumstances. Under certain situations, rather than being depleted, contingent resources might be "self-renewing" or perhaps even "self-augmenting" (Hood, 1983, p. 144). The use of the prefix "self" is perhaps a little misleading as it suggest that "augmentation" or "replenishment" of resources is in some way automatic. However, the replenishment of one's authority would not seem to be automatically assured in the conduct of efforts in line with a commitment. Rather, the replenishment of a government's authority would only come about as a result of

exercising it in a careful and conscious way. Indeed, the ill-judged use of resources presents risks associated with committing which shall be returned to later in the chapter.

Because resources provide the means for achieving objectives, resources offer governments the capacity to pursue the object of their intentions. For Hood (1983) and Hood and Margetts (2007), objectives are achieved by utilising the four basic types of resource in the "tool-kit", in a variety of different combinations. By focusing on resources, Hood's argument can be used to extend our understanding of capacity to commit. For being committed implies the utilisation of resources of precisely the kinds that Hood identifies in pursuit of aims or policy objectives. By extension, without resources, political actors do not have the capacity to pursue the object of their commitment. Capacity is therefore best understood as a vector of resources.

Writing from a different perspective, Rhodes (e.g. 1988; 1997) also draws heavily on the notion of "resources", understood in very similar terms to Hood as "…the means for supplying the needs of public sector organisations." (Rhodes, 1988, p. 90). However, Rhodes is keen to emphasise the importance of the "exchange" of resources which occurs through sectoral networks in which policy is made, and implemented (see Chapter One for a discussion of this body of work). Because of the framework of mutual "power-dependency" which characterises these networks, actors must engage in the exchange of resources to be able to exercise power, and to achieve their desired ends (Rhodes, 1997). Similarly, resources are not spent, but rather exchanged in "positive-sum" games in which none of the participants benefit at the sole expense of the other (Ibid).

Rhodes also emphasises how resources have "variable" and "transmutable" qualities, with their utility and value depending on the perceptions and needs of the actors and organisations in networks (Rhodes, 1997, p. 201). For example, a government actor does not have a fixed quantity of political legitimacy. Instead, its legitimacy diminishes or increases as a result of the perceptions of other actors, and those perceptions are in turn influenced by relationships between actors.

The governance account focuses on the relationship between actors for understanding resource utilisation in politics. For this reason, although it was originally developed as an account of power and influence, it also offers important insights for understanding capacity to commit. It highlights how even in the absence of the possession of resources, actors are still capable of achieving their ends by engaging in appropriate relationships of exchange. Resources are important, but for capacity to commit, the actual possession of resources is not necessary, as relationships of exchange can allow actors to gain access to and control over resources and how they are utilised. Finally, by implication, the coordination of resources, including the ability to persuade and to control their utilisation is a resource in itself on which political actors can draw in order to sustain capacity for commitment.

The governance perspective points out that it is control over, access to, and sometimes the nature of the way resources are utilised that are important, and not necessarily their possession. Similarly, judicious utilisation of resources can actually contribute to the building of a political actor's capacity to achieve ends. As Rhodes points out, the value of resources is not fixed. Instead, just like any other commodity exchanged in trade, the value is determined by the perceptions of the trading actors. For example, certain forms of

political information are only of value in the context of the mutual exchange of political gossip, perhaps when sustaining motivation amongst supporters. Capacity to commit can therefore be built.

As we have seen, the notion of resources is central to the work of the authors discussed in this section of the chapter. For Hood (1983), Hood and Margetts (2007), and Rhodes, resources are means for achieving ends in politics. The implications of the discussion of capacity for the concept of commitment are set out below.

Capacity is defined here as the ability to pursue the ends to which one is committed. As such, capacity is a vector of resources for committing. This implies both (i) the capacity to make an initial commitment, and (ii) the capacity for that commitment to be sustained. However, the resources required for each of these different elements of commitment might be quite different. As part of this argument, limb two of the definition, capacity in commitment, operates as a vector of resources for getting to the stage at which one becomes committed. This is distinct from those resources required in the process of being committed, which are relevant to limb three of the definition.

The term capability, as used by Hood (1983), suggest skills, strategies or abilities in the use of resources to achieve specific goals. Resources, by contrast, are broadly defined as the means for achieving ends in politics (Rhodes, 1988; Hood, 1983). To capture the range of qualities resources possess, this thesis offers the distinction between "hard" and "soft" resources in commitment.

Hard resources are tangible and external to an actor. Examples might include:

- *Funds*, as the adequacy of the size of the available budget for the task, etc.

- *Tangible systems*, understood as the adequacy of the technical infrastructure such as the information technology systems, the security of the buildings for housing servers, etc.,

- *Human resources*, understood as the adequacy to the task in hand of the simple numbers of politicians, civil servants and specially hired consultants who can be brought in for the work.

By contrast, *soft resources* are intangible. They exist in a state which is either internal to an actor, or in an actor's relationship with others. Examples are:

- *Skills and abilities*, e.g. in oratory, technical expertise or in coordination.

- *Degree of influence*, understood as the social relationships between people, which support their power to persuade others.

- *Organisational arrangements*.

The coordination of "hard" and "soft" resources as a skill in coordination is a "soft" resource in itself. Similarly, the term "capabilities" as used by Hood (1983), are further examples of skills/strategies in the use of resources, and are therefore incorporated into the definition offered by this thesis as another "soft" resource.

Resources are clearly central to achieving influence over outcomes in politics. However, as we have seen it is not the possession of resources which is important, but access to and control over resources which provide the means for achieving ends, and by implication,

the capacity to commit. Although the perceived value of some resources in exchange relationships is important, this is not always the case, especially in a political context. The value of certain "hard" resources such as funds, are much less subjective than some "soft" resources such as information.

3. Assets at hazard

The third limb of the definition introduces the notion of risk as an important element of commitment. To be committed means more than intending to act to achieve an object, and the capacity to do so. It must also imply accepting some element of risk. Risk is an issue recognised as being significant by Tilly, who defines commitment as "…persistence in costly or risky activity, declarations of readiness to persevere, resistance to attack." (Tilly, 1999, p. 261). It is the notion of risk which separates the state of being committed from a simple preference, even if that preference is strongly held. As McCourt (2003) recognises, commitment needs to be challenging in some way. If a government actor had no need to risk anything to pursue their course of action, then we have no reason to say that they are committed. They might just be following that course of action, perhaps with no great commitment. Commitment, therefore, in part involves a willingness to engage in risky activity to bring about the object of that commitment.

When committing to a course of action, political actors face risks of incurring potentially significant costs associated with doing so. The risks associated with committing require preparedness on the part of the committed actor to incur losses. In a political context, this loss would most likely be in the form of a reduction in one's ability to influence outcomes through a diminution of one's control over resources. The nature and manner of resources

utilisation in politics has been discussed with respect to capacity for commitment. However, several additional points need to be addressed which relate specifically to "assets at hazard". As we have seen, some resources might be used to build capacity, and under certain circumstances, some resources might even replenish themselves (Hood, 1983). However, even these varieties of resource are scarce because actors and organisations cannot rely on their presence or their usefulness in all situations. In addition, one's control over resources can be undermined by investing them without caution, or without skill, as the act of deploying resources is not sufficient to ensure desired outcomes. As Rhodes (1988) argues, resources do not equate to power, only the "…potential for the exercise of power." (p. 42). Instead, this ability to influence outcomes is dependent upon strategies for or skills in the effective deployment of resources, understood in this thesis as a "soft" resource in itself. A distinction, however, needs to be made between those resources utilised by an actor which are implicated in the act of getting to commitment (the resources required to pursue ends encapsulated under the limb of "capacity"), and those resources, understood as assets which are put at hazard by being committed (resources to be discussed here under the limb of "assets at hazard"). Whilst certain resources might be required to get to being committed, these are quite different from those risked by being committed.

Those resources utilised as "assets" to obtain an object, for example, time, energy and/or funds, could be wasted. If utilised unsuccessfully, or unstrategically, these forms of interaction run the risk of incurring a net loss. This issue relates to the utilisation of soft resources, just as much as more tangible or hard resources. Soft resources do not imply plenty, just as is the case with harder, more tangible resources. For example, backbench MPs from the governing party have the capacity, particularly when large groups act

together, to influence the behaviour of the Government. Capacity in this sense is a vector for the possession of or control over a range of hard and soft resources, including the use of a refusal to consent or acquiesce, perhaps expressed through not voting in line with the whip, or giving vent to their negative views about a policy to the news media. These are resources implicated in capacity to commit, in this case, to undermining a government policy. By contrast, the resources an actor put at hazard in the process of being committed are quite different. The MP does not risk her skills in influencing, or even her ability to vote against the whip, or to talk to the news media. Instead, the backbench MP must be willing to put at risk other resources, including for example, her authority, or perhaps her legitimacy in the eyes of other backbench MPs, especially those who might have spend a long time in opposition, and are willing to put aside their own views for the sake of party unity. Indeed, the diminished credibility of those backbench politicians who become known in Westminster as "the usual suspects" because of the frequency of their rebellions against their party5 are a case in point. Having exerted the ability to undermine the Government by rebelling against the Whip on numerous occasions, these MPs no longer have credibility in the eyes of the Government or indeed with many backbench MPs in their own party (Cowley, 2002; 2005). The resources which offered them the capacity to commit to undermining the Government on a particular policy were not therefore the resources, or assets, put at hazard by the act of committing. Instead, the asset at hazard was the intangible soft resource of credibility.

Because of the scarcity of certain resources, any decision to utilise them in the act of committing necessarily involves making a choice about preferences, not only in terms of the selection of a course of action, but also the rejection of alternatives. To borrow an

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[5] For a discussion of Labour Party rebels relevant to the Government discussed in this work, see Cowley (2002; 2005a).

insight from economic theory, a choice about the utilisation of resources in the act of being committed carries with it certain opportunity costs, defined by Buchanan (2008) as the "…value of opportunities forgone as a result of choice in the presence of scarcity." Resources must be utilised when committing to achieving an object, yet the issue of scarcity requires the careful consideration of priorities when considering which aims to pursue. A government's willingness to utilise a portion of the scarce resources over which it has control is therefore a clear indication of a committed stance.

The utilisation of resources in the act of committing, and indeed, sustaining that commitment (this will be discussed in the following section on perseverance) puts those resources at hazard. Those resources may not be available, or of use, when called upon in the process of committing in the future. Similarly, the utilisation of scarce resources when committing necessarily implies that opportunity costs are incurred when becoming or remaining committed. Each of these forms of risk puts a political actor's assets at hazard. As Hirshleifer (2001) points out, one's plans only really become commitments when it is likely that they will require some form of sacrifice. Committed actors must therefore be willing to put "assets at hazard" when engaging in the process of committing.

4. Perseverance over time

This limb of the definition emphasises how actors must persevere over time in pursuit of the object of their commitment, because commitment is itself a process which occurs over time. As the discussion of "assets at hazard" pointed out, an important component of being committed is an acceptance of different kinds of risk. Commitment, we have seen above, risks the wastage of certain hard or soft resources. This is because commitment requires capacity, and that intentions, specified at the level of objectives to be achieved,

may not in fact be achieved. This raises issue of opportunity costs. Similarly, assets put at hazard may also be lost, even if the object to which one is committed is achieved. The need for perseverance risks the possibility that the opponents' stamina for the long battle might be greater than that of the committed actor. A government, for example, may find itself in the position of registering a net loss in resources over which it has control for little or no gain because its opponents are willing to continue to hazard their assets for a longer period of time. Risks associated with hazarding one's assets, and persevering against an opponent who is more committed, may combine. In such circumstances, the longer the government must persevere to secure its objective, the more it must hazard particular assets.

A view of commitment as involving perseverance can be found in a range of literatures reviewed for this thesis. Nesse (2001), for example, appeals to the idea of perseverance when defining commitment as "…more than a mere prediction, plan or wish…. it implies that an individual will keep trying to reach a self-imposed goal or expectation, even if that becomes difficult to sustain." (p. 245). Similarly, Becker (1960) is concerned to point out that commitment involves, among other things, "… a consistent line of activity…" (p. 32). This is worth particular attention, as Becker's usage underscores an important distinction between perseverance as the *product* of commitment, and perseverance in the *process of obtaining* that product. Becker's understanding of perseverance in commitment seems to be concerned with the product of commitment. For example, when applied at the level of a government, perseverance of the sort described by Becker would relate to how once a policy was in place, a government would persevere with the policy over time i.e. persevering having achieved the object. By contrast, Nesse (2001), and Tilly (1999, 2005) identify perseverance as a character of one's orientation towards the pursuit of an object.

In this instance, the form of perseverance against resistance would be displayed in the effort to formulate, deliver and introduce a policy. It is perseverance in the process of obtaining the object of one's commitment that is most relevant to the current discussion, because it is the nature of government's commitment to achieving an object (policy) that is central to this thesis.

The requirement to persevere is a point which is made explicitly by Tilly (1999), particularly with respect to his discussion of the role of commitment in the formation and internal cohesion of social movements. For Tilly, social movements are distinguishable from other forms of politics because of a combination of three factors: their (i) sustained campaign on behalf of collective claims, (ii) their use of multiple forms of performance – such as public meetings, demonstrations etc., and importantly for this discussion (iii) their displays of worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment, or "WUNC" (1999). In this context, commitment, as we have seen elsewhere in this thesis, not only implies risk, but also "…declarations of readiness to persevere, resistance to attack", displayed by means of "…simultaneous risk or sacrifice…" (Tilly, 1999, p. 261). Tilly seems to be making two points about WUNC which are relevant here. Firstly, the *communication* of WUNC, and therefore commitment is particularly significant, as this comprises the act of demonstrating to others the character of a social movement and its orientation towards whatever issue is at stake. More implicitly, Tilly (2005) is also making claims about the formation and sustainment of group identity, with demonstrations of WUNC offering a means for the "…powerful assertion of popular sovereignty." (Tilly, 2005, p. 309). As part of this display, commitment is seen to have both a symbolic value for group participants, and a communicative value through its conveyance of important political or social messages to others. Tilly (2005) does not, however, take the issue of perseverance

seriously enough, for if actors are not willing to persevere, then they cannot be said to be committed. In this work, Tilly mistakenly takes demonstrations of commitment to be a defining feature. However, perseverance must be more than a means to communicate an intention. It does more than show others the extent of one's commitment. It requires that actors actually do continue to behave in a particular way over time, despite the risks of incurring loss. Perseverance does demonstrate the robustness of one's intentions, and shows how they are not liable to crumble under pressure. However, perseverance in the face of resistance is a behaviour exhibited by a committed actor.

The importance of committed actor's being resolved to persist with a particular course of action, where actual resistance is experienced, is a central element of being committed. Accepting risk is therefore once again an important factor, and it is also becoming clear that commitment must occur over time. That is to say, commitment is a concept which must be capable of capturing a phenomenon which unfolds over time.

5. Perseverance against escalating costs

A number of authors offer additional insight into the concept of commitment by concerning themselves with the *escalation* of commitment to a course of action (Fox and Staw, 1979; Staw, 1981; Staw and Ross, 1978; Whyte, 1986). Escalation describes a situation where "[r]ather than accept an immediate loss and withdraw from a poor investment alternative, decision makers may be prone to commit new and additional resources." (Staw and Ross, 1978, p. 40). It is the costs associated with continuing with the course of action which an actor is required to "sink" if they wish to persevere, which Staw argues are escalating. Staw's experimental research into investment decisions by individuals and by businesses reinforces this point. It shows a tendency for individuals to

invest additional resources in declining rather than improving parts of a business, especially if the individual concerned held primary responsibility for the initial investment decision (Staw, 1976). Interestingly, later research has showed how this trend could be moderated by providing decision-makers with additional information about the cause of the setback to a part of the business. Additional resource expenditure was more likely to follow setbacks that were exogenous rather than endogenous, particularly where negative feedback had already been received on the initial investment (Staw and Ross, 1978). Similarly, setbacks that were not expected to reoccur again in the future, tended to produce large additional investment of resources (Ibid).

Staw's work suggests that persevering in the face of escalating costs is likely to be done in the hope of avoiding loss, as measured from the reference point of the initial decision to allocate resources to the goal, so as to make good on the initial "investment" (Staw and Ross, 1978; Fox and Staw, 1979; Staw 1981). In this way, committed actors can become "…locked into a course of action…" when seeking to achieve an object (Staw, 1981, p. 578). When "locked-in" in this way, committed actors display a tendency to refuse to treat sunk costs as sunk, "throwing good money after bad or committing new resources to a losing course of action." (Staw, 1981, p. 578). By "sunk costs", I mean those costs already incurred. Strictly speaking, rational actors should discount all costs already incurred from future decisions about behaviour, as these resources have already been spent/allocated/exchanged, and nothing more can be done about them. For example, a baker whose business is failing should not allow the large costs of purchasing an expensive Italian brick oven to impact on her future decisions about continuation with the business. On this strict economic view of decision making, to do so would be construed as "irrational". This is because the cost of the oven has already been spent or "sunk", so

cannot impact on the outcome of future decisions. A rational actor must make decisions about future behaviour in isolation from these sunk costs.

Actors who are "locked-in" may selectively filter information they receive in an attempt to maintain their commitment by framing sources of resistance as exogenous (Staw, 1981). This is important, as actors find it easier to allocate additional resources when the cause of a setback is seen as being external to the initial resource investment decision (Staw and Ross, 1978). Different type of filter might be used where an actor is "locked-in". In a policy making context, for example, actors might seek to limit their own access to information, or perhaps undermine the credibility of information which runs counter to the stated rationale for persevering with a policy. Governments might choose to rely on external advice from a source that is sympathetic to its policy proposal, whilst disregarding, or actively undermining advice from groups which hold a counter position. In doing so, the costs of perseverance, although escalating in an objective sense, are filtered so that they do not enter the calculations of policy makers in an explicit way. This strategy allows the stance of being "locked-in" to persist.

The term "lock-in", as used by Staw (1981) is not the result of an external constraint, but the precise source of motivation, and therefore the tendency to escalate commitment is unclear. However, Staw (Ibid) does postulate two different explanations. One source of motivation for escalating commitments rests upon a desire to appear to be consistent in one's own perceptions of self. Here, the source of the "lock-in" lies in some inner psychological compulsion. This sort of rationale takes the form of what Aronson (1968) labels an "internal justification" (Aronson, 1968). This is an "intra-individual process" where actors behave in ways to protect their *self*-image. This is a variety of *thought-style*,

or a distinct sub-conscious way of framing one's own perceptions or understandings. By contrast, a tendency to escalate commitment might also be motivated by attempts to appear to *others* to be consistent. This takes the form of an "external justification", and appeals to Festinger's (1957) notion of congruency theory which suggests that a rationale might lie in an individual's desire to prove to others that they were not wrong to pursue a particular course of action.

In contrast with some psychological theories, in politics a range of constrains on action, both internal and external, can have the effect of locking-in an actor to the continuation of an action. It is possible to identify at least four distinct types of "lock-in" which could be operating to ensure perseverance with apparently failing strategies or policies, but which are not necessarily reliant on an inner psychological compulsion. These might include:

a.   *Objective constraint* - either by law, by coercive force, or perhaps by the disappearance of feasible alternatives. For example, Fukuyama's (1992) contentious argument that with the dissolution of the USSR, the world was effectively 'locked-in' to some form of Western Liberal Democracy as the dominant form of social and economic organisation.

b.   *Weighing of interests* – the objective costs of continuation and discontinuation are weighed against each other, before an actor concludes in favour of continuation on the basis of judgements about the balance of perceived advantage.

c.   *Political embarrassment* - ability to conceive the possibility of withdrawal or reversal, but disproportionately weighting the costs of doing so in one's calculations, because of the importance attached to avoiding the specifically

political embarrassment associated with doing so (e.g. a policy "U turn" or loss of political credibility, etc.).

d.   *Inability to conceive of alternative* –subjective inability to comprehend the possibility of withdrawal or a decision reversal.

With all four types of lock-in discussed here, actors need not treat sunk costs as sunk. Types (a) and (b) are sometimes offered by organisational behaviour scholars to explain the decision making styles of employees when they "commit" to organisations (see Allen and Mayer, 1990). For example, a lack of marketable skills in a highly competitive job market presents (a) *objective constraints* which ensure perseverance over time; or continuing in an unfulfilling job role because after (b) *weighing of interests*, continuation is preferable to the expense of retraining and entering a new profession at a more junior level. Both these forms of "lock-in" mechanism need not discount sunk costs, yet they are based on judgements about *objective* conditions. By contrast, Staw's lock in mechanism seems to rely on *subjective* reasoning which has been coloured by the commitment of the type captured by "lock-in" types (c) and (d), rather than by objective evidence as the source of justification.

Understood along the dimensions of objective and subjective constraints, a clear distinction opens up between the two broad types of lock-in. Lock-in type (a) lacks volition. It constitutes at best a highly attenuated variety of commitment based on the absence of alternatives. Similarly, lock-in type (b) presents only a very weak case of commitment. In both examples, if a change in circumstance brought with it a change in the objective distribution of benefits, then commitment might fail. By contrast, lock-in type (c) and (d) are fairly unambiguously examples of committed behaviour. They lack

the coercion of (a) and the instrumentalism of (b), and are instead grounded in a subjective weighing of alternatives, coloured by a desire to achieve the object of their intention.

Elements of Staw's "lock-in" argument are similar to Tilly's (1999) treatment of commitment as perseverance over time, because it tests the resolution of the committed actor to continue in the face of escalating costs. Perseverance over time (limb 4) and escalating costs (limb 5) are clearly very closely related, although they are not synonymous with one another. To understand how they are related, we need to appreciate the various ways in which costs can rise over time for the committed actor.

Given that a government must mobilise resources to achieve ends (Hood, 1983; Hood and Margetts, 2007; Rhodes, 1988) a government that is committed to a policy faces certain costs associated with that commitment. A number of distinctions need to be made between the *types* of cost associated with being committed. Figure 2.1, below, shows the types of cost associated with commitment over time, and in the face of escalating costs.

The costs faced by a government are of a number of different types. For example, there are those relatively simple costs associated with continuing to explain government policy over time, or perhaps those costs associated with winning over a government's own reluctant supporters. Still others will be the costs of producing detailed policy designs and publishing them. All things being equal, these costs would arise at roughly the same level each week or month over the period that government initially tries to develop policy, and then to get its legislation onto the statute book (or whatever other destination it might have in mind). That scenario is represented by line 1 "constant costs" in figure 2.1, below.

However, by definition, even these constant costs mount up over time. Because the rate at which costs arise is constant, the rate at which the sum total of resources expended over time accumulates at a constant rate. The rate at which constant costs mount up over time is shown by line 2.

In certain circumstances, the costs of being committed might rise over time. For example, the press might increase their condemnation of a government's position, or a set of reluctant backbenchers might need ever stronger pressure to be applied before they acquiesce to vote for the policy. Sensing a government under pressure, the opposition might grow bolder, and the controversy surrounding the issue feeds on itself. This scenario is shown by line 3. Again, because we are dealing with a process concept which unfolds over time, these costs will accumulate so long as a government remains committed. Recognising the culmination of those rising costs presents a cost line similar to the one shown in line 4 of the diagram.

Figure 2.1 Types of cost associated with commitment
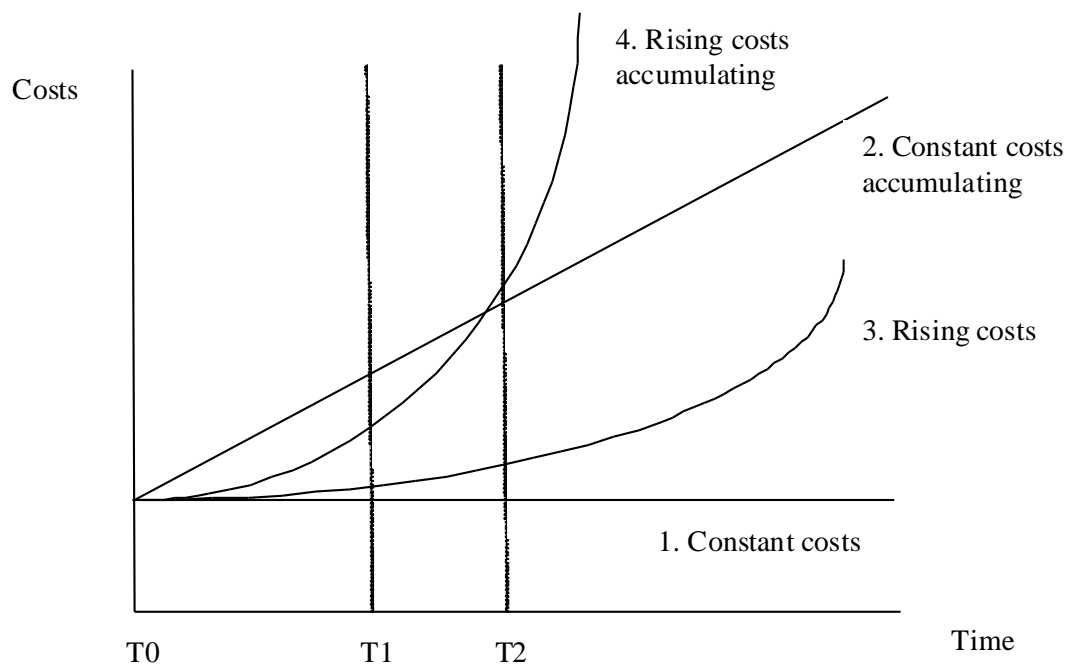
As we have already seen, a "rational" government which only cares about the costs that it expects to incur in the future, is one that regards sunk costs as sunk. This is because "rational" actors view resources that have already been expended as no longer being available, and so are discounted when making decisions about future behaviour. For example, consider a government's position on T1, as represented in figure 2.1. If this Government does not care about the costs it has incurred since T0, and instead cares only about what it will have to incur before T2, then those arguing from a classical economic perspective would say that the government (quite rationally by the standards of expected utility theory) is treating sunk costs as sunk. However, experience suggests that most governments do not act in that way. This is because usually, performing policy U turns is, politically, very risky. It can potentially undermine both a government's credibility with others and their own supporters' loyalty. This means that, typically, governments do not

wish to treat sunk costs of their policy commitments as sunk. Instead, they treat them as investments on which they must make good, and will continue to view spent resources as relevant to future resource allocation decisions. Committed governments are therefore more likely to care about lines 2 and 4 or the diagram.

A government that is committed to its policy, despite costs accumulating in the manner shown in line 4, is persevering in the face of escalating costs. One that is lucky enough only to face the accumulation of constant costs shown in line 3 (perhaps the policy is not very controversial or complex), perseveres in the face of rising costs. However, although there may be situations where these costs are minimised, such as passing delegated legislation, there are almost no situations in government in which policies do not face at least constant and accumulating costs to some degree, before the government gets them adopted and implemented.

Not only must a committed actor be prepared to face down risks and continue in the face of resistance, they must also be willing to do so when the associated costs rise, and perhaps even as they escalate. If an actor was not willing to persist when the going gets tough, we would not want to say that they were displaying commitment. Persistence against rising or escalating costs are therefore necessary for commitment.

6. Self-binding

This element of the definition is concerned with a strategy through which commitment can be pursued, and is predominantly drawn from the literature on credible commitments. When read in the context of the discussion which has already been offered in this chapter,

the credible commitment literature implicitly echoes a number of the key attributes of the concept which have already been discussed.

In much of the credible commitment literature, the concept plays the role of a device or strategy through which governments hope to influence the behaviour of other rational political actors, by shaping their perceptions. Most often, this is achieved by attempting to remove uncertainty to create "confident expectations" about future behaviour, by ensuring the veracity of particular commitment claims (Mercer, 1996).

Based on rational choice notions of utility maximisation, Schelling (2007), for example, argues that an individual becomes committed when the possible range of his or her actions are voluntarily and irrevocably forfeited. Individuals enter this position by "…removing certain options from the feasible set, making them more costly, or available only with a delay.", or by "...insulating themselves from knowledge of their existence." (Elster, 2000, p. 1). As McCourt (2003) argues, irrevocability is central to this process. If actors were able to change their minds about how to behave at some future point, regardless of how committed they consider themselves to be right now, we could not be sure of the credibility of their claims. This variety of credible commitment is what Elster (2000) refers to as "pre-commitment" or "self-binding". It imposes "…constraints that take the form of making known options less available…" (p. 4) as actors purposefully limit their sphere of possible future action. Actors become bound to the commitment they have made, because they have given up choices which would have allowed them to do otherwise.

Actors bind themselves for a number of reasons. For example, this strategy might be useful to prevent weakness of one's own will. The famous example offered by Elster (1979) is that of Ulysses tying himself to the mast of his ship, so that he could hear the call of the Sirens in Homer's epic poem, but he could not reach them, even if he subsequently decided to do so. Similarly, governments sometimes find it necessary to ensure the continuation of their own sense of resolution. This is particularly relevant in situation when the appeal of short terms goals at a later date could encourage deviation from previous intentions. For example, Qian and Weingast (1997) argue that the adoption of federalism as a form of political organisation fulfils precisely this role, as it entrenches a commitment to preserve the efficiency of the free market.

In other cases, pre-commitments are structured so that they convince others of the seriousness of one's resolve, and by implication, the credibility of one's commitment claims. Nesse (2000b) points out how actors might actively seek to shift the distribution of incentives within a situation, so that fulfilment of the commitment becomes in the committer's interests. By adopting this strategy, others are more likely to be convinced that an actor is going to behave in a particular way. Self-binding to convince another actor operates as a strategy based on investing with the provision of a collateral guarantee. The story of the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés, scuttling his ships before doing battle with the Aztecs, presents a clear example of this phenomenon. By removing his army's only option for retreat, Cortés changed the structure of incentives in the situation, binding himself and indeed his men, to an attack on the Aztec empire. This sent out a clear message to would-be mutineers about the nature of Cortez's intentions and the credibility of his commitment claims. Strategies of self-binding link an actor's expression of intent at a given point in time to their actions in the future, and in doing so, actor's expect to

achieve influence over others. As Goodenough (2001) suggests, self-binding strategies provide a means for "...supporting the honesty of a communication…" because of an assumption that actors will behave in ways which are consistent with their own self-interest (p. 252).

In the game theory language of much of this credible commitment literature, commitment plays the role of "…a device to leave the last clear chance to decide the outcome with the other party." (Schelling, 1960, p. 37). Commitments that are "credible" address the problems caused by the potential for rational actor's preferences to change over time, which makes collective action amongst individual utility maximises more difficult to sustain.

Although writing from a slightly different perspective, Becker (1960) nonetheless sees commitment in similar terms. Commitment occurs interests that were originally extraneous to a situation, become engaged in a direct way with the action to which one is committed. This is what he calls "placing a side-bet". For example, in poker, side-bets are those instances where bets are made with others, in addition to one's principle stake in the poker game. For Becker, such side-bets increase the costs of defaulting on a commitment, and add to the value of adopting a "consistent line of behaviour". This points to clear similarities between game theory and rational actor approaches.

The credibility of commitments is also important for international relations theorists. Despite strong incentives for states to cooperate, short term benefits might create equally strong incentives for states to break their promises (Gaubatz, 1996). For example, the inability of a number of OECD countries, including France, Germany and Italy, to honour

commitments to international aid made at the 2005 G8 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland, is a case in point (OECD, 2010). The global economic downturn in financial markets since 2008 has shifted the structure of incentives so that, on the balance of alternatives, continued commitment to these aims is no longer in those states' best interest, when judged against simple utility maximisation criteria. These G8 commitments therefore lack credibility in the sense discussed here, since the costs or reneging were not as great as to ensure the credibility of the commitment claims.

From a historical institutional perspective, North and Weingast (1989) make a similar point, but show how governments might establish the credibility of commitment claims through self-binding strategies which are more effective than those G8 commitments. Utilising historical data, North and Weingast (1989) explain the development of seventeenth century English political institutions in credible commitment terms. Their central claim is that the crown acquiesced in the imposition of certain institutional configurations, which constrained its capacity to exercise "…arbitrary and confiscatory powers." (North and Weingast, 1989, p. 804). By altering existing political institutions, the Crown offered selected privileged actors (Parliament) an effective power of veto over future policy changes. The credibility of the commitment to this settlement was ensured by building this decision into the structural context within which current and future actors operated. The action was binding in that it brought into the decision making process those actors who would stand to lose if the Crown made efforts to renege on the decision. The irrevocability of the decision is what made the commitment credible.

Although dealing with diverse subject matters, the common thread running through these studies is that, empirically, commitment is often used as a mechanism for self-imposed

constraints on the range of future decisions available to policy makers. Governments committing in this way are effectively "tying their own hands" to persuade other actors of the veracity of their claims (Elster, 1985; 2000). Credible commitments, then, are strategies for ensuring the continuation of one's own stance against weakness of the will, or else for persuading others of the reliability of one's commitment claims, to encourage cooperative behaviour.

Self-binding presents one strategy through which commitment might be pursued. However, it is not the only strategy, and so the presence of self-binding cannot be assured, even in a strongly committed actor. Self-binding is not therefore a necessary condition of commitment. Indeed, governments are careful not to always "voluntarily" or "irrevocably" forfeit the scope of their future actions by shifting the objective structure of incentives. As the G8 example used above suggests, when governments seek to bind themselves, the consequences of reneging are probably less severe than when governments default on commitment claims made to convince others. In the presence of self-binding, we can infer commitment, but we cannot infer anything from its absence. Self-binding is not therefore a necessary condition, although it is sufficient.

7. Reputation

Binding oneself to a course of action as a strategy from commitment is not the only technique available to political actors seeking to influence outcomes by establishing their credibility. They might also attempt to do so through pledges and the weight of their reputation.

According to Nesse (2000), commitment comes in two different forms. Actors' can make commitments on the basis of either "collateral", exemplified by the notion of "pre-commitment" which was discussed above, or as an alternative, commitments can be made which involve a continued option for reneging. Tang's (2005) analysis usefully reinforces this distinction, arguing that commitments between nation states often take the form of *pledges* to act in certain ways. Similarly, McMahon (1991) suggests that, for diplomats, the credibility of both threats and promises are important as deterrents and reassurances in equal measure (McMahon, 1991, p. 455). However, unlike the notion of pre-commitment, the credibility of a pledge or threat is not ensured through "making a side-bet" (Becker, 1960), or shifting the structure of incentives (Goodenough, 2000; Nesse, 2001b). Instead, a central concern is other states' perceptions of a state's *reputation* for commitment (Tang, 2005). It is an assessment of a state's reputation which informs the degree of credibility attributed to its commitment claims.

For Tang (2005), this credibility consists quite specifically in a reputation for, or a perception of capability, the perception of interest, and a reputation for being resolved. In any given situation, "an actor's credibility is determined by other actors' combined assessment of these three factors" (Tang, 2005, p. 38). In international relations, credibility is "…not its own possession, but that of other states." (Tang, 2005, p. 38). Credibility is therefore a relational concept. Governments cannot *have* credibility, rather, they must be *perceived as being* credible. A failure to appreciate the true nature of credibility, together with a mistaken belief in the fungibility of reputation, leads states to "…confuse themselves, mislead their domestic audiences, and squander their countries' blood and treasure for the wrong commodity." (Tang, 2005, p. 40). As Tang argues, "…although a state constantly fears that others may assign reputation to it based on past behaviour, the state never assigns reputation to other states based on their past

behaviour." (2005, p. 42). Credibility understood as reputation for commitment is not an effective discipline upon an actor to ensure they remain committed.

Both the reputational and the pre-commitment, or self-binding readings of the credible commitment literatures describe quite specific types of political situation, in which the committer attempts to influence the future behaviour of others. It is not therefore the intrinsic value of the object of the commitment which is most significant (i.e. what has been committed to), but rather the conclusions the committer believes that others will draw from that behaviour. It is the demonstration of commitment that is important for these actors.

Just as with the pre-commitment literature, the "reputational" approach to understanding credibility offers a further strategy through which commitment might be pursued. However, it is clearly not the only strategy, and evidence of attempts to demonstrate a reputation for commitment might not be present in a committed actor, even if that actor is strongly committed.

8. Thought style

This final strand of the definition introduces the idea of committed actors having a particular thought style. Sunk costs have already been discussed in this chapter with respect to the risks associated with being committed. However, important distinction need to be made between the behaviour of not treating sunk costs as sunk, and the thought style of recognising a degree of accountability to a past cost which is now sunk. Sunk costs are those costs which have already been accrued, and for which resources have been utilised. Rational actors, even if they are strongly committed, should therefore discount the value

of any costs already incurred from future decisions about behaviour, because sunk costs cannot impact on future outcomes. Sunk cost should not therefore be calculated when weighing the balance of alternatives in commitment.

An important point of departure from the more straight forward forms of economic understanding of commitment is the explanation for why individuals continue to commit, when subjective, expected utility might suggest that it may be irrational for them to do so. Becker's (1960) suggests that individuals remain committed because the "..consequences of inconsistency will be so expensive that inconsistency in his bargaining stance is no longer a feasible alternative." (Becker, 1960, p. 35). In effect, Becker is arguing that certain costs will be more highly weighted than simple forms of subjective expected utility theory would lead one to expect.

By contrast, Staw (1981) and Staw and Ross (1978), rejects this line of reasoning because of its basis in an overly-restrictive, individual subjective utility model of human decision making. Staw and Ross (1978) for example, suggest that resource utilisation decisions might be motivated by a desire to rectify past losses, just as much as they might be motivated by the pursuit of future gain. This notion would not sit well with the traditional rational actor model, where "sunk costs" should play no part in rational choices, because they can no longer have any effect on the payoff of future decisions. Allowing such costs to affect future decisions is generally called, in conventional economics, "the sunk-cost fallacy".

Instead, Staw and Ross (1978) argue that past losses experienced by an actor, may enter into her decision calculations, even if it is not expected that such past losses will

materially affect future conditions. Although costs may be sunk in an objective sense, they "…may not be sunk psychologically…" (p. 578) and could well play a role in future decisions. As such, actors continue with a course of action, even when it is failing, to justify that behaviour. As noted earlier, the source of their motivation, and therefore the tendency to escalate commitment is thought to rest in a number of possible places. Staw and Ross (1978) postulate that such behaviour might be attributable to an "internal justification" (Aronson, 1968), understood as an attempt to appear to be consistent in one's own perceptions of self. This is an "intra-individual process" where actors behave in ways to protect their *self*-image. This is a variety of *thought-style*, or a distinct sub-conscious way of framing one's own perceptions or understandings.

By contrast, by appealing to Festinger's (1957) notion of "congruence theory" a tendency to escalate commitment might also be motivated by an "external justification", or attempts to appear to *others* to be consistent. In the context of the discussion of political commitments, where the target is other people, attempts to appear consistent at a later point, are matters of reputation, credibility or perhaps (in very strong cases) self-binding, not of thought style.

Taking a different view, Whyte (1986) and Glen (1993), look to explain escalation by appealing to prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979). They assert that individuals are more risk averse in their decision making when they are in "the domain of gains", but much more willing to make riskier decisions in "the domain of losses", relative to a fixed reference point. In addition, losses are psychologically felt much heavier than are positive gains. Put simply, if something is going badly it is much more keenly felt then something going equivalently well, so we might expect actors to escalate commitment when in the

domain of losses much more readily then if they expected positive gains. Again, this explanation is based not on an understanding of individual subjective utility, but on a view of decision making which allows for sunk costs to enter into an actor's decision making calculations.

The idea of a commitment suggests that it is quite possible for committed actors to act "irrationally" as a *consequence* of their commitment, by continuing to calculate the value of sunk costs in future transactions. A thought style of this kind is, by definition, not a behaviour but rather an unconscious urge, and so evidence of this kind of thought style would represent a strong indicator for commitment.

Elements of a definition of commitment

This chapter has shown that a range of options are available to those social scientists who might wish to utilise the notion of commitment in their research. However, although there are broad areas of overlap between these literatures, each option privileges slightly different aspects of what these writers conceive of as "being committed". That is to say, the different conceptualisations of commitment identified here point to subtly different attributes of the concept. Some of these attributes echo elements identified by the "common usage" approach, but importantly, it is not clear that any one of the uses of the term delineated here would allow us to identify the precise dimensions of the concept for the purposes of operationalisation, which is ultimately the aim of concept formation in empirical social research.

The discussion in this chapter has shown that it is possible to infer eight distinct strands of usage – or limbs – which interlink in a quite precise way, and which can be organised into a complex but perfectly serviceable initial definition of commitment. The aim of the concluding part of this chapter is to complete this process by integrating these strands into an eight limbed definition of the term. Each of these eight strands of the definition are shown in the table below (table 2.2), which identifies each of the composite elements, and provides a brief statement of their meaning. This is followed by a discussion of the relationship between these different elements, which shows how they fit together to form a multifaceted definition of political commitment. In doing so, the discussion offers a clearly formed concept for empirical research, the adequacy of which will be tested in the remainder of the thesis. It also offers an organisational principle, and an analytical framework around which the rest of this thesis hangs.

Table 2.2: Components, meanings and sources for defining commitment

Components of definition	Statement of meaning
1. Intention	An intention toward a particular object. Volition. The purposeful making of a decision.
2. Capacity	Defined as a vector of resources. Capacity to pursue object, *getting to a state of* being committed.
3. Assets put at hazard	Willingness to mobilise resources to achieve an end. Acceptance of associated risk. Utilisation of resources for the process of *being committed*.
4. Perseverance	Perseverance against resistance over time.
5. Against escalating costs	Continuing in face of rising costs.
6. Self-binding, pre-commitment	Binding to prevent weakness of the will by committed actor in the future. Increase credibility of commitment claims
7. Reputation	Other actors' belief in committed actors' commitment. Technique for encouraging "cooperative behaviour"
8. Thought style, rationale	Treat sunk costs as not sunk, further action to justify past action.

To summarise, commitment is composed of (1) *intention*; (2) the *capacity* to pursue objectives (3) a willingness to mobilise one's resources under situations of risk, put *assets at hazard*; (4) *persevere* over time; and if necessary (5) in the face of rising or *escalating costs*. (6) *Self-binding* as a strategy for pursuing commitment is also an important component of this definition, as is the process of (7) *reputation*, as both offer the committed actor a means by which to convince others of the veracity of their intentions. These latter elements of the concept (6-7) are not aspects of the notion of commitment itself, but are instead strategies through which commitment might be pursued. Similarly, the adoption of a (8) *thought style* is included in the definition as a rationale through which commitment might be sustained, rather than as a central aspect of the notion of commitment itself.

Now that we have some idea of what commitment might be comprised, we must turn our attention to the relationship between each of the different elements. By doing so, this chapter sets out not only the definitional attributes, but also the *structure* of the concept of political commitment.

Following Sartori (1970), the process of setting out the concept's structure will present it as a classical concept for reasons discussed earlier in Chapter One. Understood this way, the necessary conditions for commitment are elements (1) through (5) as set out in table 2. 1, above. Because these conditions are necessary, the absence of any one of these five conditions means that an actor is exhibiting something less then commitment.

- Without (1) *intention*, actors might have aspirations, wishes or preferences but not commitment (e.g. Allen and Meyer, 1990; Brown, 1996; Mayer and Herscovitch, 2001; Mowday et al, 1982).

- Without (2) *capacity*, actors might have frustrated intentions but not be able to commit (e.g. Hood, 1983; Hood and Margetts, 2007; McCourt, 2003; Morrissey, 1995; Rhodes, 1985 etc).

- Someone who was not prepared to put (3) *assets at hazard* in pursuit of their goal could not be said to be committed (e.g. Becker, 1970; Staw, 1978). Similarly, if the goal could be achieved without needing to put one's assets at risk, then the actor did not need to commit. The goal was such that the issue of commitment simply did not arise in the first place.

As the discussion of the literature has suggested, conditions (1) - (3) are not on their own enough. These first three conditions together refer to a government's orientation or stance towards a policy, but this is not quite what we mean when we say that an actor is committed. Commitment is more than a perspective or a principle which one adopts. At most, a government that met the first three conditions would be said to be "willing to commit itself" or "committed, in principle". By contrast, commitment implies action, and for that we require additional evidence of behaviour before we can confidently asset that an actor is committed.

- If the goal could be achieved so quickly that (4) *perseverance* was not required, then the question of commitment was not asked in the first place.

- If a government does not persist when the going gets tough, especially in the face of (5) *escalating costs*, it can hardly be said to be committed.

These conditions are separately necessary and jointly sufficient for commitment.

In addition, the review of the literature in this chapter has shown that commitment can be *pursued* in various ways. It is possible to infer some basic strategies which flow from the concept, but which are not strictly part of the definition. We would, however, expect to find strong evidence of these strategies, if a government is indeed committed. These strategies are set out in limbs (6) and (7), which capture the different empirical manifestations of committed behaviours.

Governments can be committed to their policies without binding themselves irrevocably, but there are situations where governments might resort to doing so. Governments (6) bind themselves to alter the behaviour of others, or to ensure that its own resolution does not weaken in the future. We can therefore take evidence of active self-binding as a strong indication of a desire to demonstrate the strength of a commitment.

Similarly, in the absence of collateral, (7) reputation building and the pursuit of credibility may also be used, but such a strategy is neither needed in pursuit of many goals nor actually relied upon very widely; nor, finally, does the literature suggest that it is, necessarily, very effective (Mahon, 1991; Tang, 2005).

Finally, although not a strategy in the sense set out above, a relevant *indicator* of commitment in the phase of perseverance and escalation is how consciously and deliberately the government refuses to treat sunk costs as sunk. As suggested by Staw (1978, 1981), a refusal to treat sunk costs as sunk might not arise as a consciously reasoned plan, but rather the product of unconscious urges driving the decision making process. This suggests that a committed government would allow sunk costs to enter into

future decisions, especially where past resource allocation has escalated in the past. However, we need not expect this always or only to be attempted in a deliberate manner.

A distinction needs to be drawn between the act of *behaving* and the possession of *beliefs* with respect to sunk costs. This is because we would not expect sunk costs as a product of beliefs to enter into future decisions in a deliberate way. Subjectively believing, as a matter of (8) thought style, that one ought not simply to treat sunk costs as sunk, is an additional feature, over and above the behaviour. As was argued earlier in this chapter, the objective behaviour is a necessary condition for commitment and is closely linked with limb (5) escalation of commitment. However, a subjective thought style is not a type of behaviour. This is an especially important point where the actor in question is as large and diverse as a government. By no means would all ministers and civil service policy staff share a thought style which propagated a belief that they must avoid a reversal of policy that would render their previous sacrifices worthless. This seems unlikely, even if they all support the institutional behaviour of the Government to remain committed to the policy.

A final point need to be made with respect to the importance of resources for this concept of commitment. The concept of "resources", understood as the means for achieving ends, is implicated in a number of the different limbs of commitment set out in the definition offered by this chapter. The distinction between the slightly different roles that "resources" play in the relevant limbs of the definition is as follows.

Resources are required for an actor to have the capacity to commit in the first instance, or for getting to the state of *being committed* (limb 2 – "capacity"). Resources are also

required in the form of "assets" to be put at hazard in the *process of committing* (limb 3 – "assets at hazard"). Importantly, these need not be the same resources which are required to commit in the first instance. However, the same set of resource required in the process of committing are again implicated, because to sustain a commitment, an actor must hazard her assets *over time* (limb 4 – "perseverance"). Similarly, the potential costs required for sustaining commitment i.e. those same "assets" implicated by limbs (3) and (4) of the concept, may escalate over time (limb 5 – "escalation"). Resources, and the risks posed to them when one seeks to achieve political ends, are therefore central to what it means to have a political commitment.

Commitment by collective actors such as governments

Although some of the theories used to derive the elements of the definition were developed with the activities of governments in mind, a number of central ideas were first developed to understand the commitment of actors at an individual level. It is worth noting, however, that there is a long tradition in social science of transposing concepts formed first to understand individual behaviour to determine whether they can apply to the context of the collective actor. For example, prospect theory, which was discussed earlier, is regularly applied to the behaviour of political actors, including whole governments (e.g. Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; McDermott and Kugler, 2001, 2004). This thesis is therefore not out of line with the conventions of political science for exploring the implications of theory initially developed from individual behaviour to the behaviour of collective actors.

However, because this thesis explores whether a concept of commitment in government can, in part, be built from material that was initially developed to understand the behaviour of individual actors, important differences must be acknowledged. The work is concerned with commitment in collective bodies – in particular, a government, and so the issue of moving from the individual to the collective actor implies differences, both of context (the significance of institutions), and of process (arguments conducted in the process of becoming committed are explicit rather than implicit). For example, the strand of the definition dealing with "intention" is largely drawn from a body of literature which focuses on the level of the individual operating within an organisation. The analysis here is concerned with the collective intention, with governments consisting of diverse people and organisation. Similarly, the strand of the definition dealing with "thought style" is in part, drawn from a psychological theory developed under experimental conditions. Although Staw (1976) has been happy to claim the significance of his arguments for government actors, the issue of the unit of analysis will be kept in mind in this thesis. In might well be the case that the process of collective action may itself hinder commitment, because people cannot agree. Often, though, the institutions of politics are the very things which enable agreement that might sustain commitment, but this is a matter that needs to be settled empirically.

Conclusion

These eight limbs of the definition do not suggest explanations for why a government might commit itself to one policy rather than another, or why this commitment might be sustained over time, especially in the face of resistance or potential risks associated with

continuation of the course of action. Although these questions present fascinating areas for research in themselves, they constitute a quite separate task from the one attempted by this thesis. Moreover, these questions are underpinned by a range of more pressing, prior questions about the nature of commitment, its character in the context of political decision making, and how this relates to the identity cards policy debate. Given the state of the discipline, the most fruitful way forward is to set out a clear, theoretically informed definition, to enrich that definition by making it more precise, and to develop operational measures for each of its limbs, before finally testing that definition empirically in a theoretically and methodologically salient case. Consequently, this thesis sets aside explanatory questions about why the British Government was committed to the introduction of identity cards. The focus is squarely on the necessary task of the formation, operationalisation, and the development of measures for the concept of political commitment. It is to the task of providing operational criteria and measures for each of these limbs to which the following chapter will now turn.

Chapter Three - Methodological strategy for conceptualising, operationalising, and measuring political commitment

The previous chapter offered a new definition of political commitment, comprised of eight limbs, which were drawn from a range of literatures from across the social sciences. The aims of this chapter are similarly methodological. It sets out a strategy for the operationalisation of the definition, and for the specification of a series of empirical measures for each of its limbs. In establishing these operational criteria, this chapter provides a bridge between the concept formation work of Chapter Two, and the empirical analyses of the concept which is to come in Chapters Four and Five. On the basis of the operationalisation of the definition, the chapter specifies the types of data to be drawn upon, as well as the sources of these data used to evaluate each of the limbs. It also identifies the procedure for its collection, and offers a discussion of the forms of the analyses to be conducted later in this thesis. The chapter, however, begins by presenting the case selection rationale, and the argument for the use of an "arena approach", as a way of organising this thesis, and for understanding the environment within which British policy making occurs.

Case selection and bounding

The case has been selected on the basis of an assessment of strong government commitment to the identity cards policy. The argument for case selection on this basis is made by Gerring (2007), who suggests that cases with "extreme" scores on the phenomenon of interest are likely to demonstrate the characteristics of that phenomenon in a particularly pure form. As was argued in Chapter One, the case of the Blair Labour Government's stance towards an identity cards policy appears to meet this standard, at least on the basis of an initial examination of the evidence. The identity card policy was clearly a controversial measure, and the Government had to face down stiff opposition and engage in careful political manoeuvring to get its bill through.

The period of interest to this study is between May 1997 and December 2006. It therefore purposefully excludes the activities of the previous Conservative administration, including the then Home Secretary, Michael Howard MP's 1995 Green Paper (Home Office, 1995), which put forward the notion of introducing a voluntary identity card scheme. This decision was made on methodological grounds because the Howard proposals were from a separate government, so are irrelevant for making an assessment of the Labour Government's commitment to the identity cards policy.

Over the proposed timeframe, two separate identity cards bills were introduced into the Commons. One failed for lack of time because of a General Election, but the other received Royal Assent in April 2006. Rather than ending the analysis in this place, however, the period of interest for this study continues for another eight months before ending in the winter of that year. December 2006 saw the publication by the Home Office

of the document entitled *Strategic Action Plan for the National Identity Scheme* (Home Office, 2006a). The significance of this document is that it represents a significant shift in the Government's thinking about the identity cards scheme. Furthermore, it turned out to be the route map for the scheme that the Labour Government actually started to implement during its final term in office. This point therefore usefully serves as a marker of the end of the period of interest.

The focus on the timeframe offered above provides a number of distinct advantages. Primarily, it allows for a sufficient number of observations on each of the dimensions of the concept to be made, so that a solid assessment of the Government's commitment to the policy can be attempted. A series of observations made over time allows for a variety of within case comparisons between scores on each of the eight different limbs of the concept. In doing so, the analysis offers an assessment of how the different limbs of the concept change in relation to one another, at a number of given points over the course of the case. It also allows for an assessment to be made of how each of the individual limbs might change over time. The periodisation for the case therefore offers enough observation points to make a convincing argument for a fully developed conceptualisation of the notion of political commitment.

An arena approach to understanding political commitment

Following the work of Jordan and Richardson (1987), this thesis uses the notion of "arena" as a tool for understanding the setting within which political commitment to policies occurs. Although Jordan and Richardson offer no clear definition, they use the

notion of policy making "arenas" to capturing the different contexts, actors, and interests that are implicated in the policy making process in different institutional settings in British politics. The following definition is inferred from the text. For the purpose of this thesis, an arena is understood as *an environment defined by a particular set of institutions where a distinctive set of actors and organisations come together to attempt to influence policy decisions. Differences in the nature of the institutions upon which arenas are built provide the actors operating within those arenas with different opportunities and constraints to exercise influence over governmental policy decisions*.

Arenas can be distinguished from each other by the specific configuration of actors and organisations which occupy them, the nature of the relationships between those actors, and the institutionalised rules by which they are governed, including those which specify their principal activities. Arenas therefore vary in terms of the constraints and opportunities for influencing governmental policy that they present. As Jordan and Richardson (1987) imply, several arenas will co-exist in one governmental system. In certain circumstances, it is expected that their populations will overlap. This means that actors may be active in more than one arena at a time, perhaps even simultaneously. Although Jordan and Richardson (1987) make no such claims, it is reasonable to expect that certain types of arenas, such as an executive arena, would operate in all states. Others, such as the media arena, would perhaps only operate in states where it was possible for the media to interact between a government and a population in a way which contributes to the policy process. On the understanding of an "arena" offered in this thesis, the term functions as a description both of the institutional locale and the manner in which a range of actors come together to interact in order to influence policy decisions.

The arena approach is useful for this analysis because it presents a way of disaggregating data which deals with groups of actors who attempt to influence the development of government policy. Although arenas are environments where policy making occurs, and are therefore governed by the rules of the institutions on which they are based, they are not institutions in themselves. That is to say, it is the institutions on which arenas are based, rather than the arena itself, which provides the rules which govern the political behaviour of the actors whom occupy that arena. Because arenas are distinguished from each other by their institutional features and by the different actors who may be important in them, there are good grounds for suspecting that a government's commitment to its policy would exhibit important differences between arenas. For example, the manner in which "intention" is presented by a government is likely to differ between arenas, because of the different actors involved, and the different rules which govern their interactions. For similar reasons, governments would need to possess different sorts of "capacities" in each arena, in order to successfully achieve their ends. At the same time, "assets at hazard" and the costs which might "escalate" as a government commits, as well as the risks involved, will also differ in nature between arenas. If policies are to be presented in different arenas at different stages in their development, then this is a strong reason for suspecting that the kinds of "perseverance" required of a committed government will also differ. Considering the commitment of a government across two of the principal arenas also presents the opportunity for comparisons. If systematically undertaken, the comparison between cases will allow any similarities or differences in the operation of commitment in the two arenas to be thrown into much sharper relief, thereby permitting greater confidence to be placed in the inferences one makes from data to conclusions (6 and Bellamy, 2011). It is for these reasons that this thesis compares political

commitment in the case study of identity cards policy between two of the most important arenas in British politics. These are the "executive arena" and the "parliamentary arena".

The executive arena is central to this thesis because it is the location of many original decisions about political commitment to policy. This especially seems to have been the case with respect to the identity cards policy. Moreover, it is the arena in which the authorised and autonomous power of the Government is at its strongest, and where it is able to exert a high degree of decisive control over any final commitment to policy preferences. The parliamentary arena is the second focus for this study. Unlike other arenas, the parliamentary process is a necessary part of any policy making which requires statutory backing in British politics. Moreover, in keeping with the case selection strategy for this thesis, Parliament proved to be a venue for some of the most interesting aspects of the identity cards debate. The parliamentary arena is therefore likely to be a suitable environment for capturing the sorts of data of relevance for assessing political commitment[6].

The empirical chapters of the thesis are organised around the distinction between the two principal arenas. Their aims are to present an empirical assessment of the usefulness of the concept of political commitment, to show how it can be operationalised in empirical case studies, and to offer potential ways for the measurement of this concept to be further developed and refined. The focus on two arenas also creates a subdivision of the case, and provides the opportunity to make comparisons of the similarities and differences between

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[6] Other examples which are not included in this thesis might include, but are not restricted to, the "media arena" (this might be relevant in respect of e.g. policy commentary by influential journalists, damaging front page stories, moral panic, etc.), the "pressure and interest group arena" (e.g. policy communities and policy networks spanning them etc.) and the "judicial arena" (e.g. judicial review, appeals, regulatory oversight of executive or parliamentary action).

the displays of the Government's commitment in each arena. The identification of similarities and differences in the operation of commitment between arenas allows for the more accurate delineation of the contours of the concept.

Methodology for operationalisation and measurement of the definition, and application of the coding strategy

To briefly recount the argument, this thesis presents a conceptualisation of commitment, understood as a process phenomenon, whereby an actor commits to a particular object. A committed actor is one who (1) *intends* to achieve that object, (2) who has sufficient *capacity* to pursue, (3) who is willing to *risk their assets*, and who is willing to (4) *persevere* against resistance, (5) even in the face of *escalating costs*. Moreover, the concept formation work in Chapter Two showed that committed governments can be expected to behave in particular ways. These included (6) *self-binding* to an object to which they are committed, or by (7) building *reputation* for commitment. Finally, (8) an assessment of government commitment is possible through an analysis of evidence for the *thought style*, or the way a government consciously and deliberately treats its sunk costs.

The following section of this chapter sets out the operationalisation procedure used here for each of the limbs of this definition in turn. The overall strategy for each limb was, however, broadly similar. "High level" category codes were derived deductively from the conceptual framework for each of the eight limbs of the definition. This is what Miles and Huberman (1994) refer to as a provisional "start list" for ordering the analysis (p. 58).

This process was followed by the creation of a number of additional subsidiary empirical categories under each of the eight main groups of codes corresponding to each limb. These were added on an inductive "bottom-up" basis as the analysis progressed. This process of "extension" to existing categories (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) progressed by returning to material that had already been coded, and subjecting it to further analysis using a new code thrown up by the data itself. Further subcategories to the original code were created, thereby allowing for a more "open-minded" and "context- sensitive" analysis to be conducted (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Coding data in this way created the opportunity to capture particular empirical aspects of each of the eight limbs that were specific to the case study.

Data were analysed according to the following procedure. Firstly, data were coded with "high-level" category codes derived directly from the definition, including, for example, (1) "demonstration of intention"; (2) "capacity" and (3) "assets at hazard". Once this initial process was completed, a further coding process took place with secondary level codes being applied. This allowed the analysis to distinguish between different dimensions of the initial high-level category codes. Having achieved some familiarity with the data, these codes were much more empirically grounded. For example, data coded for "capacity" were further divided between subcategories, including "hard resources" and "soft resources". At this secondary level, coded strips of data were ordered sequentially for the process of constructing chronologies. Where appropriate, coding was then applied at a tertiary level, with codes being derived inductively, directly from the data. Coding at this stage was sometimes categorical, whereas at other times it was possible to attribute ordinal codes. The process and the level of code applied depended on the precise nature of the strand of the definition to which they related. In some

circumstances, this included a quaternary stage. Figure 3.1 presents a schematic diagram of this process.

Figure 3.1 Diagram showing example structure of coding strategy
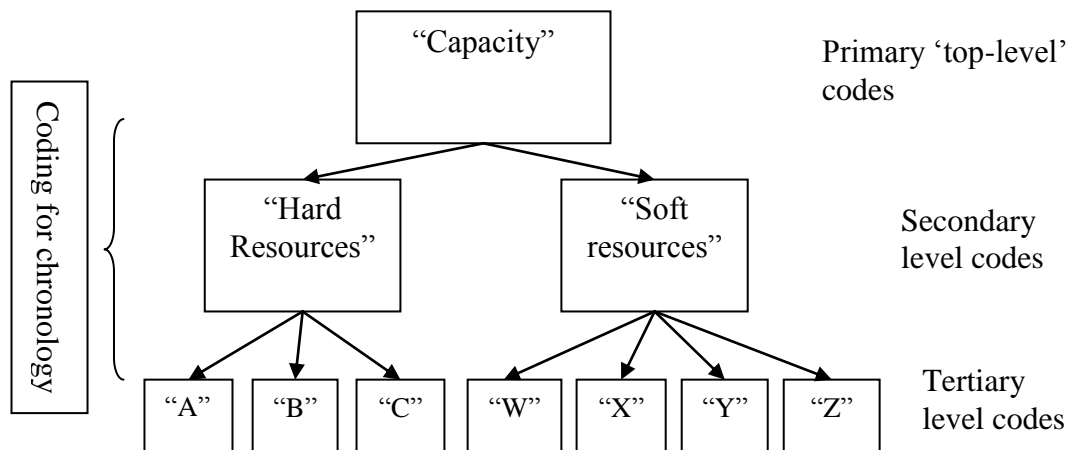
The approach taken towards coding data for this thesis is one which seeks to apply predominantly deductively derived codes to predominantly qualitative data through the use of judgements. This approach was utilised for coding data across all of the eight different limbs. This judgment-based coding strategy was applied systematically, following the procedure set out above.

Specifically, the process of applying the codes involved making judgements about attributes of the data on the basis of what was known about the document from which it was taken. Judgements about coding, and the attribution of scores for the different limbs also took into account the wider background of the rest of the case. This means that the codes were not applied on a mechanical basis of identifying individual words, or lines of text, taken out of context, as might be the case with more quantitatively orientated content

data analysis techniques. Rather, "judgement-based coding" actively seeks to capture context in the process of the application of the code. This means that the inevitable requirement of making judgements about context which occur when working with social scientific data are captured by the process of coding "at the coal face", rather than being retrospectively applied afterward, for example when writing up. Thus, coding data in this way makes systematic use of contextual knowledge.

The following sections of this chapter set out the strategy for operationalisation and measurement of each of the limbs of commitment.

1. **Intention**

A necessary component of this concept is that a government must "intend" to commit, and that intention be directed towards a specific "object". This "object" can be further distinguished between the "ends" and the "means" to which a government is committed. A challenge presented by this strand of the definition is that "intention" as a limb of the definition drew on theories relating to the intentions of individual actors. However, this makes the process of identifying the intention of a whole government more straightforward that the process of coding data for individuals. This is because there are good reasons to believe that the collective intention of an organisation will, at some level or other, be made explicit. In the case of a government, evidence of these decisions would be available in the documentation produced by Cabinet, and in the advice given by civil servants to ministers. However, these data are not available because it falls under the

secrecy of the thirty year rule laid down under the Public Record Act (1958)[7]. For this reason, the analysis has had to be content with *demonstrations* of government intention as a proxy for intention proper. The implications of this limitation will be discussed in Chapter Six.

A number of different aspects of "demonstrations of intention" were held to be important. These include the (1) stated object of intention, the (2), timing, and the (3) decisiveness, or strength of intention. These elements of intention were thought to be significant because they offered a means by which the suspected similarities and differences between arenas might be assessed, despite it not being clear how these differences might be expressed at this stage. For (1) "object of intention", documentary evidence and interview data were coded for details of policy statements referencing "identity cards" or "entitlement cards". These data were coded in two distinct ways. A distinction was drawn between the (i) substantive policy measures, the "means", and (ii) rationale, argument, justifications, the "ends". These were identified through statements relating to policy aims, and/or which presented an argument for the introduction of a scheme. The list below details these codes.

"Means":

    a. "Scope": *population of individuals envisaged to be included in the scheme.*

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[7] The thirty year rule refers to the practice of keeping secret, documents produced by government departments for a period of thirty years, after which time they are transferred to the National Archives and made available to the public. Some things are, however, subject to longer restriction. Materials deemed to be of continuing national security importance are restricted for fifty years. Papers about private individuals are often still restricted for a century, for data protection reasons. Similarly, commercially sensitive materials are subject to longer restriction. This is worth highlighting, as any of these three rationales for extended non-disclosure might be important in the future for the case of the identity card debate. In response to the findings of a review it had commissioned, the Labour government announced in February 2010 its intention to reduce this period to twenty years, but it left office before it could introduce the necessary legislation.

b. "Nature of the register": *technological design, composition of the register*

c. "Costs": *overall expenditure, savings to public purse*

d. "Enrolment procedure": *how, when, under what conditions, compulsion*

e. "Requirement to carry": *requirement post enrolment, physically hold cards, compulsion*

f. "Data sharing": *implicit following uses, or explicit statements of intent*

"Ends":

a. "Security"

b. "Normal crimes"

c. "Serious and organised crime"

d. "Identity fraud"

e. "Public administration"

f. "Convenience"

g. "Immigration and illegal"

h. "Working and international pressure"

i. "Citizenship"

j. "Globalisation"

Data were then coded for (2) timing, identifying points at which statements were made. Detailed chronologies were created through the collation and the ordering of descriptions of events into extensive tables. Chronologies of the publication of relevant government documents, of parliamentary debates and of select committee hearings reports, were created.

Where appropriate, codes were applied to assess (3) strength of intention. Again, two strategies were employed. Demonstrations of "means" were assessed contextually for consistency over time. "Ends" were also assessed for consistency, but also for clarity of language used, for the prominence of a particular justification in the overall argument of the document or text, and for the extent to which other arguments in the same context were predicated on the justification in question. On this basis, a judgement was applied and ordinal codes were attributed. The scores for these codes ranged from *low,* through to *moderate* and *high*. Details on thresholds are outlined in table 3.1, below. The sensitivity of this analysis was judged to be sufficient for identifying changes between justifications offered by government over time, but broad enough, given the type of qualitative data that were being dealt with, to prevent false distinctions and erroneous findings being inferred from invalid coding judgements.

Table 3.1. Thresholds for strength of justification of intention

Strength of demonstration of intention	Indicators for thresholds
Weak	• Arguments appealed to indirectly or directly but not given strong significance. Perhaps only one or two mentions. • Argument used only as basis for making other stronger argument about different issue. • Not pivotal to strip of data as a whole (whole speech, document etc.)
Moderate	• Identified directly as a contributing factor. • Appealed to frequently and argument sustained. • Language used mostly factual. Some use of data.
Strong	• Use of definitive statements. • Strong/full use of supporting data. • Unequivocal and very strong/emotive language. • Clear association made between argument and case for introduction. • Presentation of argument as central to strip of data (document etc.)

This strategy was deployed over both arenas to allow for comparative assessments to be made of similarities and differences along these dimensions both over time and between arenas.

2. Capacity

A further necessary attribute of political commitment is the capacity to pursue an object, understood as a vector of resources. A government's capacity for commitment is therefore a function of the adequacy of its resources for pursuing the object of its intention. The operationalisation of this limb is therefore focused on government efforts to influence events through the exercise of control over resources. The resources available to governments are distinguished between "hard" and "soft". Hard resources are external to an individual and tangible. The "hard" resources of the sort likely to be of use in different policy making environments are "money", "people" and "capital assets". By contrast, "soft resources" are sometimes internal, and other times exist in the relationships between people. They are therefore intangible. Examples of relevant "soft" resources are identified as e.g. "organisation", "skills" and so on. Coding of documentary and interview data used the definitions of these terms listed below.

"Hard" resources:

a. "funds": *as the adequacy of the size of the available budget for the task*

b. "capital assets": *including tangible systems, adequacy of technical infrastructure e.g. IT,*

c. "human resources": *the adequacy to the task of the simple numbers of politicians, civil servants, consultants etc.*

"Soft" resources:

    a. "organisational arrangements*"*

    b. "skills": *detailed specialist knowledge, know-how*

    c. "social relationships": *between people, given their positions and roles*

    d. "Persuasion"*: abilities to influence others, secure consent*.

In the parliamentary arena, for the purpose of getting legislation through, the "hard" resources of "money" and "capital assets" are much less important than the resource of "human resources" (understood as a greater number of MPs who formally take the party whip, then those who take the whip of other parties) because of where this arena is located in the policy process. However, a government's majority is not a question of simple numbers, because greater weight of people does not mean that a winning vote can necessarily be assumed in the Commons. Even if a government's majority is large, backbenchers can, and do rebel. For this reason, it was expected that soft resources will be more important in any effort to understand capacity in the parliamentary arena.

As Rhodes (1988) and Hood (1983) emphasise, a resource is not always a fixed commodity. As we have seen earlier, some resources increase as they are used, whilst others are depleted. This point applies equally to both "soft" and "hard" resources. For example, soft resources such as "authority" can be depleted through imprudent use, such as a government too harshly or too frequently suppressing back bench rebellions. Similarly, successfully getting its legislation onto the statute book may result in the growth of a government's reputation for resolve or determination. This might prove to be a valuable resource for use in the future, or in another arena.

In the parliamentary arena, data from ministers, policy level civil servants, and technical commentators close to the policy making process were coded for evidence of their perceptions about the growth and depletion of "soft" resources. Assessments were also made of the growth and depletion of other resources from, for example, the evidence in the parliamentary arena of the Government's success in controlling backbench rebellions and their use of allocation of time motions.

In the executive arena, both hard and soft resources are important, but they matter in different ways. Both "funds" and "capital assets" are likely to be much more relevant here than in the parliamentary arena, because it is the executive arena where such details are considered. However, it is also likely that there will be differences between the operation of the political or "core" executive (Rhodes and Dunleavy, 1995) —especially the Cabinet—and the administrative executive. For this reason, with respect to "soft" resources, both interview and documentary sources for the executive arena were coded for the *de jure* and *de facto* power to veto proposed decisions. Resources were also coded for their value in influencing or in implementing. Table 3.2 summarises the main types of soft resource coded for in the executive.

Table 3.2. Organisational, skill and influence elements in 'capacity' for carrying through intention, in political commitment ('soft resources')

	Political capacity		**Administrative capacity**			**Operational capacity**
Nature of influence over others	Persuasion, political leadership, authority		Formal employing authority within own organisation, persuasion in inter-organisational relations			Greater task-specific expertise
Lead responsibility	Ministers, govt. whips, bill team	Principal minister	Permanent Secretary, lead policy officers	Lead policy officer	Programme and project managers	Programme and project managers, technical managers and staff
Element of capacity	Capacity to secure consent from others in *another* arena (parliament) who have the *de jure* authority to veto the decision	Capacity to secure consent from others in the *same* arena and at the *political* level, who have the *de jure* authority to veto the decision.	Capacity for effective *de facto* admin execution, across the *whole arena* after consent has been secured from those with *de jure* veto power.	Capacity to secure consent from others in the same arena at the *admin* level with the *de facto* influence to veto the decision	*Inter-org. coordination* of admin capacity, especially at the *inter-org and org* levels	*Inter-org. coordination* of admin capacity, especially at the *technical* and *information management* levels
Code applied	Type 'a'	Type 'b'	Type 'c'	Type 'd'	Type 'e'	Type 'f'

Data from the "core" executive were drawn from political biographies and memoirs, policy documents, internal briefing papers and reports released after freedom of information requests. Interviews with civil servants and politicians were also a valuable source of data. Data were coded for evidence of capacity for carrying through intention, such as capacity to call upon favours and patronage, veto decisions, and make concessions and so on. Data from the administrative executive provided more information

about assets at hazard in project authorisation and cost escalation in programme management, or "hard" resources, than they did about "soft" political resources.

3. Assets at hazard

This thesis holds that with respect to political commitment, the object of one's intention is achieved through the careful mobilisation of resources. More than this, a commitment to achieving the object of one's intention must require a willingness to risk resources or put "assets at hazard". As we have seen from the discussion both in this chapter and in Chapter Two, some resources are more finite than others. As Hood (1983) suggests, certain types of resource are "self-renewing", while others are not. Soft resources in particular, such as authority over backbenchers, are more likely to be self-renewing than many hard ones like money. Other "hard" resources are clearly not entirely malleable, such as, for example, the amount of spending allocated to a government department by the Treasury. The risk faced by government when mobilising these different kinds of resources are therefore not equal in all circumstances.

Certain risks are associated with a government's assets being depleted, because possessing fewer resources may mean that a government will find it much harder to govern. Others risks relate to the intended outcome of the resource mobilisation exercise not being achieved. Even those assets which have "renewable" properties cannot be relied upon to be available at all times or in all circumstances. For example, resources accrued in the Commons in the formation of specific social relationships, might not function the same way in the Lords, which involves a different set of actors. As the discussion of

capacity showed earlier in this chapter, even resources that can be renewed are still susceptible to depletion.

As a consequence, a significant risk facing governments is that of the opportunity costs associated with resource mobilisation. All primary legislation must pass through Parliament, yet time in this arena is a scarce commodity, with tradition and procedure constraining what a government can hope to achieve (Norton, 2001). For example, bills that have not progressed through all of the necessary parliamentary stages before the end of that session will fall. If a government still wants to introduce a measure, then it must introduce the Bill afresh in the following session. This will have implications for which items of legislation can and cannot be introduced each year. A decision to lay an item of legislation before Parliament therefore implies a decision *not* to pursue a different item of legislation. For this reason, the cost in time of contentious legislation is greater. Nevertheless, we would expect a committed government to be willing to put its assets at hazard in this way. Indeed, it is necessary for a government to be prepared to behave in this way for it to be regarded as being committed.

These two factors, opportunity costs and diminishing resources, suggest measures for cost to government of mobilising assets. One such measure is the length of time required for the legislation to get through Cabinet, and Parliament. Similarly, an assessment was made of the time taken for the legislation to progress through Parliament, relative to other items of Home Office legislation in the same period.

Context is also important for understanding risk. Quantitative assessments of costs over time are therefore supplemented by qualitative judgements drawn from interview and

biography data which were coded for actor's perceptions of costs associated with time. Similarly, data from parliamentary and standing committee hearings were coded for "hard" and "soft" resources, with codes being applied for risk based on judgements about context.

In the parliamentary arena, the Government Whip's strategy for achieving sufficient numbers on key votes is significant. Unfortunately, details of the Government whipping at each stage of the identity card legislation's parliamentary progress are not publicly available. However, it is clear from media sources and from interview data that three line whips were defied in some of the most contentious votes. These sources provided useful data to address the issue of risks to a government, because these situations present the opportunity for backbench MPs and peers to exercise their ability to challenge government policy. A count of the number of occasions when it is suspected that the Government imposed a Three Line Whip was coded for "assets at hazard". A greater number of occurrences allow inferences to be drawn about the degree of risk faced by the Government with respect to this legislation. Interview and parliamentary debates were also coded for actor's perceptions of those risks, to themselves and to the policy.

A final quantitative measure is offered here. A count of the number of rebellions, and their size, helps to refine this discussion by providing additional leverage for inferences about the degree of risk faced by the Government. In addition to the simple count, parliamentary debates around those issues against which backbenchers felt compelled to rebel, and the Government's response to those debates, was also coded for risk.

Within the executive arena, the main source of political risk stems from disagreement between different ministers or departments, which might have rather different, or perhaps conflicting, policy priorities. The position of the key regulatory bodies such as the Office of the Information Commissioner (OIC) is also of relevance here. Although formally an independent regulator, the OIC has a high degree of access and influence in Whitehall. Conflict with the regulator puts political assets at hazard, such as the legal and moral credibility of the legislation. The term "credibility" as used here relates to credibility as a resource on which a political actor can draw to achieve an object to which they are committed. This is distinct from credibility used in the rationale choice sense which relates to others perceptions of the seriousness of one's commitment claims.

A key source of risk might be a minister's, or indeed the Government's, political credibility or authority being put into question in the event of the failure of a programme or policy to which it gave a great deal of weight. Similarly, these risks to credibility or authority might be felt at departmental level, when conflict with other departments erupts in official inter-departmental committees. These risks are in addition to those associated with deploying the more quantifiable resources such as time and financial expenditure, which are also required to achieve the intended policy outcome. Data which can provide access to these risks came in the form of a close analysis of the subjective judgements of the actors most implicated in these politics, to identify situations or decisions where there was a perception of risk. The correspondence between ministers whose departmental priorities are cut across by the proposals for the identity cards scheme would have been particularly illuminating. Unfortunately, minutes of cabinet meetings and correspondence between these actors will not be declassified for nearly thirty years. When these documents are available, they will enable us to identify much better the sorts of risks to

which the Home Secretary, as the minister responsible for the department from which theses plans emanated, was exposed.

4. Perseverance over time; and 5. Escalation of costs

As we saw in Chapter Two, commitment requires that an actor is willing to persevere, where actual resistance has been experienced and might reasonably be expected to be experienced again. Given the nature of risk associated with committing, the source of resistance would be in the form of actors or institutions not complying with demands of government. Perseverance implies risk once more in the form of either the potential depletion of resources, and/or of opportunity costs associated with a course of action.

This limb of the definition required data which captures the different kinds of risks faced by political actors over time. In the parliamentary arena, backbench rebellions provide a good example of this point. Mobilising the Whip, and asking its backbenchers to vote for an item of legislation might, depending on circumstance, represents a specific instance of the Government putting assets at hazard – in this case, its authority– in an effort to achieve its ambitions. However, in the event of a rebellion, the repetition of the Government's behaviour, by whipping its backbenchers to vote for a measure on which a significant number have already rebelled, would represent perseverance in the face of resistance.

A measure for assessing the extent of perseverance, and the rate at which costs were escalating over the period of persistence was a simple count of the instances of a Whipped

Vote where resistance has already been observed. A further measure was a count of the number of rebels, as well a more qualitative assessment of the nature of the rebellion. Finally, the composition of the group of rebels was also important for making inferences about risk. A rebellion composed of backbenchers who have shown themselves ready to rebel on a number of occasions previously is of less concern to a government seeking to achieve an end, than a rebellion composed of first time or infrequent rebels.

A different assessment of perseverance could be attempted by counting the number of times the Bill was sent back from the Lords to the Commons for further consideration. Such a situation requires the Government to persevere in the face of resistance from the other chamber. Not only does this imply opportunity costs associated with the use of parliamentary time, but also directly challenges the authority of the Government. Government must again put its authority to the test, and seek to convince or persuade its MP's to vote in line with its policy. Another measure includes a count of those occasions when the Government was forced to mobilise it resources over time to overturn the defeats inflicted in the Lords, or bouts parliamentary 'ping-pong'.

In the executive arena, actors involved with the development of this policy might be expected to present their recollections in terms of the difficulties faced gaining a consensus, or the lack of support for this policy from other government departments. Data to provide evidence that the Government had persevered in the face of resistance, and possibly also when faced with escalating costs, was gathered from a number of different sources. These included both a count of the number of votes on contentious issues, the content of parliamentary debates, minister's biographies and interviews, and interviews with senior civil servants, as well as media sources.

Rather than this continual mobilisation of resources being a constant cost, the controversy and debate surrounding this policy suggests that the costs of persevering over time was as shown in line three of figure 2.1. Rather than these costs necessarily "escalating" the escalation is a function of how sunk costs associated with the rising costs are perceived by those actors who are involved. Evidence of "escalation" was accessed through qualitative interview data: specifically, those elements of the interviews which focused on the interviewee's perception of the nature of a risk faced when mobilising resources, and how policy makers come to make decisions about future allocation of resources.

6. Self-binding

In addition to building its reputation for commitment, a government might also seek to bind to its commitment so that those commitments are sustained. This form of pre-commitment or "self-binding" can be achieved in a number of different ways. At times, commitment is sustained by linking extraneous interests with the committed decision (Becker, 1960). Under different circumstances, a committed government might seek to change the structure of incentives associated with a preferred outcome, making it no longer in the committed party's interests to change its mind (Schelling, 1960; 1978; 2007).

In the parliamentary arena, the ultimate form of self-binding would be for a government to declare parliamentary approval of a piece of legislation itself to be a matter of confidence in the Government, as is the case with budgets. With respect to the identity

cards legislation the Labour Government was not willing to do this. However, a government can bind itself to its legislation in other ways. One strategy is by making things which its supporters, or the opposition, care about, conditional on their accepting its legislation. One such criterion for this strand of the definition would be evidence of the Government making firm decisions about spending, linked to the successful passage of this policy through Parliament. Other evidence would be attempts to link clearly the solution to specific problems with the introduction of identity cards, and to make clear that their benefits are fundamentally required, or that without identity cards, the issue simply will not be dealt with. This links credibility with achieving the policy aim, whose costs will be felt should that aim not be achieved.

As Elster (2000) points out, actors sometimes claim to be bound by others, when in fact they are making that claim in order to be bind themselves. For example, governments might over-interpret the claims that others make upon them, to present the appearance that the requirement to carry out a task to which they are committed weigh far greater than they do in reality. Documentary sources for the identity card programme were specifically coded for this phenomenon. Similarly, interview data were coded for the perception of the actors themselves, with respect to how they sought to frame their understanding of the issue of identity cards so that a future lack of commitment was held to imply personal loss.

7. Reputation

In certain circumstances, demonstrating the seriousness of one's commitment can be an important strategy for encouraging "cooperative behaviour" in others. This is because actors who have confident expectation that a government will sustain its commitment to a stated decision or stance are much more likely to cooperate. A committed government might attempt to build reputation for commitment to encourage cooperation in others.

Actors attempt to build reputation by convincing others that they have sufficient capacity to commit, clear and consistent intentions, and that they are resolute with respect to their policy stance (Tang, 2005). A high score of the "demonstration of intention" limb of the definition fulfils part of these criteria; the methodological assumptions behind this limb have already been discussed in Chapter Two, and its operatinalisation discussed in this chapter. Similarly, demonstration of capacity was addressed through the second strand of this definition, so a high score in that regard offers confidence for this aspect of reputation. Finally, in the parliamentary arena, attempts to build reputation for resolution were assessed by coding for demonstrations of resolve, including adopting a strongly entrenched and public position, with respect to a particular aspect of the legislation. For example, a government might attempt to demonstrate that particular concessions were not possible, because to give way would result in the whole function of the scheme being called into question. Data for this dimension of the definition were drawn from parliamentary statements which sought to explain the Government rationale for pursuit of this policy initiative.

In the executive arena, we should expect to identify similar behaviour from the lead department, if indeed the lead department is committed. They were coded for arguments

which sought to link the legislation with policy priorities that were external to the legislation. Policy documents, internal memos and leaked documents were therefore coded for evidence of this.

8. Thought style

A common, but not a necessary feature of c committed actor is their willingness to treat sunk costs as not being sunk. For example, a government's attempts to undertake further action so that past behaviour is justified, qualifies as an act of "self binding". As this thesis has already suggested, costs associated with being politically committed are often in the form of opportunity costs linked to pursuing a particular course of action over others.

We might expect committed policy makers to demonstrate evidence of this kind of thought style. Policy makers might seek to justify behaviour on the basis of costs and risks already incurred, and with a view to making good on these investments. Key to this strand of the definition is the notion that these types of behaviour are undertaken in an effort to convince oneself, of the rationality of previous behaviour, previous plans, or a particular line of thinking. It is therefore not necessary that statements which do not treat sunk costs as sunk (costs "escalating" rather than "increasing" or where levels of resources "rise" for a committed stance to be sustained), are consciously made (see figure 2.1). Rather, these sorts of behaviour represent an implicit "thought style".

Some attention needs to be given to the nature of costs before an assessment can be made of when they might have been previously "invested" and which actors are implicated. In

his work, Staw (1978) leaves the way open for this argument about convincing oneself that additional resources need to be expended. Data for this strand was therefore offered by an actor's presentation of arguments for their chosen course of action. Similarly, data was drawn from interviews, and from available internal government documentation including exchanges between politicians and civil servants, particularly between departments, which sought to justify additional resource expenditure, and was coded for evidence of this thought style.

Within the parliamentary arena, it was expected that this aspect of the concept, as it relates to convincing others of the rationality of one position, would be prominent. It was not thought likely that this would be a forum in which actors sought to publicly convince themselves. Given this, it would seem more likely that it was the expenditure of hard resources which would provide the rationale for this line of argument in this arena. Statements to Parliament about expenditure of public money might be expected to take this form. Conversely, within the executive arena, the nature of the interaction is such that, it was more likely to be both hard and soft resources which provided the rationale for the expenditure of additional assets, including the considerations about time spent, and the implications for authority and credibility between government departments and individual ministers.

Table 3.3 summarises the argument of this chapter, listing the main categories of evidence used for coding, as well as the principal coding categories used. The ambition underpinning these processes was to offer findings about the extent, nature and basis of political commitment in the parliamentary and the executive arenas, in the case study.

Table 3.3 Evidence used for coding on each element of the definition of political commitment

Components of definition	Data sources and principal codes used	
	Parliamentary arena	Executive arena
1. Intention	- Data Parliamentary record, select committee hearings; interview transcripts - Code for statements for identity, entitlement card; timing; object: 'means', 'ends' - code for strength – thresholds	- Data. Government documents; interview transcripts - Code for statements for identity, entitlement card; timing; object: 'means', 'ends' - code for strength – thresholds
2. Capacity, capability, skills	- Data. Parliamentary record, select committee hearings; interview transcripts. - Coding for 'hard' 'soft' resources; Judgement based context for context.	- Data. Government documents; interview transcripts - Coding for 'hard' 'soft' resources. Distinguish 'political', 'administrative' and 'operational' capacity. Coding for *de jure* and *de facto* influence. Code for context.
3. Assets put at hazard	- Data. Parliamentary record, speeches - Code for resources. Context and judgement based. Perception of actors own risk, department's risk, the Govt. risk. Frequency of votes, rebels, time relative to other comparative legislation - frequency of whipped votes	- Data. Home Office documents, interview data, biographies. - Code for resources ('soft' 'hard'). Context based judgements. Subjective perception of actors own risk, department's risk, the Govt. risk. Cabinet splits etc. Inter and intra departmental level
4. Perseverance	- Data. Parliamentary data, interview transcript. - Code frequency of - number of defeats inflicted by the Lords, Parliamentary 'ping-pong'; imposition of the whip on BB MPs when a number have already rebelled on that issue. Code for context. Actor's perception of own/department's perseverance.	- Data. Government documents, interview transcripts - Code perceptions of costs to self – inference to government level, at cabinet, departmental, inter-departmental level.
5. Against escalating costs	- Data. Parliamentary data, interview transcripts, biographies -Code perceptions of costs to self – inference to government level.	- Data. Biographies, interview transcripts. - Code for subjective perceptions of accruing cost. Code for context of resource mobilisation – inference to accruing costs.
6. Self-binding	-Data. Parliamentary record. Interview transcript, biographies. - Code for binding oneself; bound by others, efforts to convince others that govt. is constrained by linking extraneous interest to object of commitment	- Data. Govt. docs, interview data, biographies. Briefing documents. - Code for binding oneself; bound by others, efforts to convince others that govt. is constrained by linking extraneous interest to object of commitment
7. Reputation	- Data. Parliamentary record Building reputation for commitment - Demonstration of capacity, interests, building reputation for resolve.	- Data. Home Office documents. - Code. building reputation for commitment Demonstration of capacity, interests, building reputation for resolve.
8. Rationale, thought style	- Data. Interview transcript, biographies Code for non-intentional justification of behaviour, perceptions of making good on investment – individual. Loss aversion implicit rather than explicit in the data – judgement based coding.	Data. Interview transcript, biographies Code for non-intentional justification of behaviour, perceptions of making good on investment – individual. Loss aversion implicit rather than explicit in the data – judgement based coding

Integrative analysis

The analyses offered in each of the two empirical chapters aims to assess the subject, the chronology, and the relative strength of each of the different limbs of commitment. Each chapter also offers an overall assessment, taking account of each of the combined scores for the different limbs together, so that a judgement about the nature of political commitment can be offered, in their respective arenas. The final chapter of the thesis will present an integrative analysis of these two separate parts of the case study. In this section, each strand of the definition is compared and contrasted between the two arenas, to identify the similarities and differences in the way that the limb was empirically manifested. Each limb is also integrated so that a total score for that limb can be attributed to the case as a whole. Secondly, the analysis offers an assessment of the combined scores of each of the different limbs together across the two arenas. This allows for judgements to be made about the degree of commitment in each arena, which can then be compared and contrasted to identify similarities and differences. Finally, this combined assessment integrates the score for the sum total of commitment on each of the limbs, and then the case as a whole. The analysis then identifies both the object of commitment, any changes that occurred over time, as well as the strength to which that object was committed to. Conducting the analysis in this way allowed for the formulation of precise statements about what the Government was commitment to, with respect to the policy of identity cards, and how this was manifested over time. In this final section, key elements are displayed in tabular form, to summarise the principal similarities and difference between arenas. The final integrative and synthetic analysis is also shown in tabular form in Chapter Six.

Data collection strategy

Much of the data for this study came from publicly available documentation, which was accessed through relevant government websites. This documentation included relevant green and white papers, and government produced research reports. The websites of other organisations involved in the politics of this issue were also accessed. These included the websites of civil liberties lobbies, different technical commentators, newspapers, technology providers, and relevant trade associations. They offered a range of policy documents and statement papers, outlining views and positions towards the policy. Other sources include leaked internal government documents and cabinet correspondence published in national newspapers. Further internal government material has been released under Freedom of Information legislation, in response to specific requests made by journalists, pressure group activists, or parliamentarians etc. For example, a series of Government Gateway Reviews were made publically available (documents produced by the Office of Government Commerce to evaluate departmental procurement strategies as they relate to specific projects). In addition, the Hansard record was accessed through the parliamentary website, as was evidence to, and reports from, Parliamentary Select Committees. These documents gave access to parliamentary speeches and debates, as well as quantitative data including records of votes, sitting times, and certainly other procedural information.

This thesis is empirically concerned with a fairly recent case study in British politics; as such, there were some limitations to the availability of documentary data, due to the British Government's thirty year rule on historical records. A methodological discussion of the issue of missing data is included in Chapter Six.

In addition to documentary sources, a series of "elite" interviews were conducted between July 2006 and May 2010, with key individuals involved in the policy making process. To facilitate this process, a preliminary desk based investigation yielded a list of organisations and key individuals involved with the policy. This involvement was sometimes as part of the consultation process, whereas at other times, the involvement was further away from the centre of Government, perhaps as a campaigner or commentator. However, because the thesis is concerned with the development of a concept of political commitment, and uses as its case the commitment of a specific government, the perceptions of actors closest to that Government were privileged when the final sample frame was drawn from the initial list of possible contacts. The views and thoughts of those towards the periphery of the policy process were also fascinating, and served as excellent background information. However, data of most relevance came from those immediately *political* actors directly involved with the development of policy.

The final sample frame included back bench politicians from the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative Parties, technology experts working in the field of information privacy, technology industry professionals with a commercial interest in the scheme, academics with a background in information policy, and policy professionals from regulatory agencies. A number of former and serving Cabinet Ministers were identified as important to the investigation, because of their proximity to the decision making process. All identified individuals were contacted, but the response rate was poor. This issue and its implications for the degree of confidence which can be reasonably placed in the research finds are discussed in Chapter Six.

Interviews were conducted with a former Cabinet Minister, backbench politicians who were vocal supporters of the policy, as well as those who were not. Senior civil servants from a number of the government departments most implicated in this policy were also interviewed, including the Home Office, and the Office of National Statistics. Key technical commentators were interviewed, who were closely involved in the consultation process, as was a representative from an important IT trade association. Individuals from those pressure groups which were directly involved in the process were interviewed. Additional data sources such as briefing documents, email correspondence and speeches made at non-public events were made available by a number of the interviewees as the process of data collection progressed. Interviewees were approached initially by email, or in some cases, by letter, and all interviews were conducted face-to-face. In total, thirteen interviews took place.

Most of the interviewees were professional individuals, and were happy to be interviewed in their office. The interviews were fairly open ended, although interview schedules were developed beforehand. Each was developed specifically for a given interview, to take into account the particularities of that interviewee's perspective, given their position with respect to the formal process of policy making in government. Each interview schedule contained a topic list and a set of broad questions which operationalised each of the limbs of commitment. The lengths of interviews were usually between one to two hours, and sought to capture the point of view of the respondent with respect to the limbs of commitment as they related to the identity cards policy. Although an initial set of questions was established before the interview, these served as a guide to the discussion. In addition, the use of probes and prompts, again prepared in advance where possible, helped to allow a fairly free discussion with the interviewees. Interviewees were also

encouraged to provide examples to clarify issues if it was felt that they were particularly relevant to the aims of the investigation, or if the interviewee's views were not clear. Where appropriate, interviewees were asked to rank issues in terms of importance, both subjectively, and for the Government. Each interview was recorded for accuracy, and then with permission, transcribed verbatim.

Interview data were by their nature, drawn from retrospective recollections of events. The potential for bias was therefore noted, and data from potentially biased sources was weighted accordingly. These methodological issues are covered in more detail in Chapter Six. Moreover, it was recognised that the distance between the events and the point at which they were recalled in interview held the potential to distort the picture presented. Although the events being discussed here were relatively recent (less than five years in some cases), recollections might still be inaccurate. Therefore corroborating evidence of events was sought when it was possible to do so. This suggested that additional care was required in the analysis of these data.

Ethical considerations

Few ethical concerns were relevant to the collection of the documentary data because much of it was already in the public domain. With respect to the collection of interview data, the usual ethical considerations relating to informed consent and professionalism were conformed to throughout the conduct of the field work (Bryman, 2004). Each interviewee was provided with a written explanation of the aims of the research, and was asked to sign a consent form, setting out terms which had been agreed beforehand,

usually by email. Consent was also gained for the use of recording equipment. Interviewees were instructed to indicate if they wished to make statements for background information, but which were not to appear directly in the thesis.

The principal ethical consideration relevant to this work related to the issue of the anonymity of public figures, in those circumstances where that condition had been agreed. This was resolved on an individual basis. In those cases where anonymity had been agreed, the issue of the "limit to confidentially" implied by the use of verbatim quotations was discussed, as is required by the Nottingham Trent University (NTU) Social Science Ethical Guidelines (NTU, 2010). However, despite a number of individuals being willing to speak openly, the decision was taken to anonymise the vast majority of interview data, except where context ensured that it was patently obvious who was being cited, and where they have given their express permission for their name to appear. This policy was adopted so that significant evidence from individuals who wished to remain anonymous could be included, because in some circumstances, the number of people involved in discussions was relatively few. This approach therefore minimised the possibility of those unnamed individual's identities being inferred through a process of elimination on the basis of those names which were included in the thesis.

Construct validity

Concept formation is a process that develops a technical term to capture the core meaning of loose notion, and replace that notion with something precise for the purpose of research (Goertz, 2005). As Kaplan (1964) suggests, it is those aspects of concepts which are

amenable to observation, and therefore operationalisation (directly or by proxy) which are of most interest in the social sciences. It is to be expected, therefore, that the formal definition and its operationalisation stand at a certain distance from the original lay notion of the concept, because operationalisation puts a premium on aspects of a concept that can be measured. This issue highlights an important consideration for this project which was the issue of construct validity, or the measure of correspondence between a theoretical construct being dealt with, and the measures which have been put forward to capture that construct (Cronbatch and Meehl, 1955; Cronbach, 1988). A related issue is that a variety of ways to proceed with the concept formation process are available. Importantly, many of these would be justifiable, because different kinds of research might require slightly different, yet precise, concepts to be utilised. In that sense, concept formation will not always lead to a single, uniquely correct result suitable for all purposes.

These two facts about the relationship between concepts for use in social science and their counterpart everyday notions were discussed by Rawls (1970, pp. 48-51) in his "*A theory of justice*". Rawls offers the idea of "reflective equilibrium" as a standard of construct validity. Although his argument was put forward for use in a philosophical context, the argument is general enough to apply to the social scientific process of concept formation. Reflective equilibrium can be summarised as the condition of a definition in which it

- has been made consistent and coherent after a series of successive adjustments to remove inconsistencies and non-essential elements;
- captures enough of the central ideas of the lay notion; such that

-   we can have confidence that any revisions to intuitive judgements about a particular case made in the light of the definition can be justified by the definition's coherence, consistency and capture of core aspects.

Rawls' standards of reflective equilibrium will be revisited in the concluding chapter (Chapter Six), in order to assess the extent to which we can have confidence in the construct validity of the concept of political commitment developed in this thesis.

Conclusion

As has been noted, the lack of an adequate conceptualisation of commitment in the political science literature has required that the first few chapters of this thesis concern themselves with concept formation, operationalisation and the specification of measurements. The current chapter has presented a good deal of this material, specifically the strategy used in operationalising the concept of "political commitment" for empirical investigation, as well as providing an account of the types of data which are of most relevance.

The following two chapters shift the focus by presenting an empirical account of the politics of contemporary identity cards policy. This case offers an analysis of the Labour Government's policy stance towards identity cards from 1997 until the end of 2006. This is undertaken by utilising the lens offered by the concept of political commitment which has been put forward in this thesis. However, the underlying focus of the thesis is methodological in nature. Whilst it is an aim of these empirical chapters to account for

these politics, these chapters primarily seek to offer an illustrative case study of the newly formed concept of commitment. The case study is presented as an environment within which the structure of the concept can be tested for consistency, and where its empirical utility can be assessed. It is to this task that the following two chapters now turn.

Chapter Four - Commitment in the Parliamentary Arena

This chapter is the first of the two empirical sections presented in this thesis. Between them, they offer an illustrative case study of the new conceptualisation of political commitment that was outlined in the previous two chapters. By drawing on data from two key political arenas, the empirical section of this thesis applies the concept in question to the case of contemporary British identity cards policy. By applying the concept, the exercise will point to any theoretical gaps or inconsistencies which could not be readily identified when working at an abstract level. In doing so, the exercise points the way for the further development and refinement of the concept in the future. Insights from this and the following two empirical chapters will be synthesised in Chapter Six

The immediate task for this chapter is that of applying the eight limbed concept of commitment to the politics of identity cards in the parliamentary arena. Each limb of the definition will be applied in turn, so that an assessment can be made of the timing, nature, the extent, and degree of change over time, of the Labour Government's "commitment". The eight limbs of the definition are (1) intention, (2) capacity, (3) assets at hazard (4) perseverance (5) escalating costs (6) self-binding (7) reputation, and finally (8) thought

style. Because the first five limbs are necessary conditions, it is expected that we will find strong scores on each of those limbs. It is also expected that commitment will manifest itself in ways that are consistent with the sixth, seventh and eights conditions set out in the previous two chapters.

The chapter will conclude by drawing comparisons between the different limbs to offer a summative assessment of their combined scores. A judgement can then be made about the nature of the Government's commitment to the identity cards policy in the parliamentary arena.

Table 4.1. Chronology of the parliamentary process

Parliamentary stages	Dates	
	Identity Cards Bill 2004-05	*Identity cards Bill 2005-06*
House of Commons		
Introduced	29 Nov 2004	25 May 2005
Second reading	20 Dec 2004	28 June 2005
Committee Stage	18, 20, 25, 27 Jan 2005	5, 6, 7, 12, 14, 19, 24 July 2005
Remaining Stages	10 Feb 2005	18 Oct 2005
House Of Lords		
Introduced	21 Feb 05	19 Oct 2005
Second reading	21 March 05	31 Oct 2005
Committee Stage		15, 16, 23 Nov 2005; 12, 14, 19 Dec 2005
Report Stage		16, 23, 30 Jan 2006
Third reading		6 Feb 2006
Consideration of amendments		
House of Commons		13 Feb 2006; 13, 16, 21, 29 March 2006
House of Lords		6, 15, 20, 28 March 2006
Royal Assent		30 March 2006

1. Intention

Government's intention to legislate on identity cards

Data for this limb of the definition was coded for the timing of statement about identity and entitlement cards, and for the nature of the object of intention, distinguishing between "means" and "ends". It also applies the thresholds set out in Chapter Three (see table 3.1) to assess the strength of intention.

Throughout the first term in office following the 1997 general election victory, the new Labour Government's stance towards identity cards scheme was fairly ambivalent. When responding to parliamentary questions, the Home Office ministers were careful not to rule the policy out entirely. Equally however, the Home Office was keen to emphasise how certain forms of card scheme could not be tolerated

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State to the Home Office, the late Lord Williams of Mostyn, made plain the Government's position, as did his colleague Lord Bassom, two years later.

> My Lords, I can assure the noble Lord that we have not closed our minds to the scheme. We have no bias either for or against ID cards…There are benefits and disadvantages in such a scheme. (HL deb. 28 Apr 1998, col. 144).

> My Lords, we would consider introducing a national identity card only if we were satisfied that the potential benefits outweighed the drawbacks. Although we are continuing to look at the issues involved, we are not convinced by the arguments in favour of a compulsory national identity card. (HL deb. 5 Apr 2000, col.1301)

> I did not say that we should not have identity cards. I tried to indicate that the Government, as with the previous government, have a very open mind on the issue. … We are giving the matter careful consideration. (HL deb. 5 Apr 2000, col.1303)

Both in the Commons and the Lords, the possibility of introducing an identity card was repeatedly played down. However, it can be seen from the wording of these and other parliamentary statements that the idea was not rejected out of hand. On the contrary, parliamentary statements suggest that identity cards were given some consideration, even if the result of those considerations were that the Government was not convinced by the idea.

Government Ministers held similarly ambivalent views towards the policy of identity card introduction. The then Home Secretary, Jack Straw MP, offered a full account of the thinking at this point.

> I see no arguments to convince me in favour of compulsory identity cards whereby a failure to carry a card in a public place would become a criminal offence. Subject to that caveat, we keep under review the balance of advantages and disadvantages that national identity cards could bring. (HC deb. 14 Jun 1999, col. 3)

The objections raised by the Home Secretary are quite specific in that they were confined to aspects of the scheme relating to the requirements paced on the holder, once that card has been issued. Straw's rejection of an identity card was therefore not complete or total as he explicitly rejected only a limited number of aspects of a particular formulation of an identity card scheme. In this reading of the data, the way was left open for any other scheme which did not include these quite specific requirements of the card holder. Straw presented the Commons with a position which simultaneously distanced the Home Office from the difficult issue of compulsion, understood in a very specific way as the requirement to produce the card on demand. At the same time, Straw's position carefully kept open the possibility of the introduction of a form of scheme without those elements being included. Straw was clearly making a distinction between the types of cards he

deemed to be unacceptable i.e. where it is incumbent on individuals to carry and produce a card on demand, and other sorts of scheme, to which he referred as voluntary.

Closer attention to what is meant by an identity card helps to unpick the Home Office's stance at this time. Usually, the term is used to describe a system which has been designed to attribute a single, secure and definitive official identity to all individuals within populations. These systems consist of a token (an identity card) which is backed up by a form of population register. Most often, contemporary examples of registers takes the form of an electronic database within which the identities of the target population are listed, it is hoped, definitively. The process of establishing a link between an individual and an identity contained within the system (authentication) can be achieved through a variety of measures. For example, a PIN system or the uses of a password or pass-phrase, or a simple check of the likeness of the holder with a photograph shown of the face of the card. More advanced methods of authentication make use of "biometric" characteristics such as fingerprints, iris measurements, or a precise digitalised image of the face. These biometric measurements are taken, converted into a digital format, and deposited on either or both the database, or in the case of a "smartcard", on a chip in the card itself. An individual's claim to a particular identity can then be authenticated by assessing the degree to which the biometric presented for inspection matches those already held on the card, or the database, which underpins the identity system.

Close reading of parliamentary statements shows a differentiation of the Home Office's position towards identity card schemes with respect to the particular blend of attributes which make up the system. The Home Office was keen to reject outright more onerous requirements on the card holder to carry the card, and to produce it on demand to the

police. By contrast, the Home Office was much more positive about the possibilities of a voluntary scheme for authenticating claims to an identity.

Some clues are given about the Home Office's thinking on the issue of compulsion at this time. Compulsion, defined as a requirement to carry and to produce a card on demand was seen as a major concern. This was particularly the case in relation to expectations about public acceptability. Indeed, concern about this issue was given as the rationale behind the Home Office's thinking on the issue of compulsion.

> Experience in other countries, particularly in Australia, shows that, although the public concerned may, in theory, be in favour of a compulsory card, when they are faced with the consequences of compulsion… At that point, support for a compulsory card tends to wither away rather rapidly. (HC deb. 14 Jun 1999. col. 4)

However, a compulsion to carry an identity card does not exhaust the range of potentially compulsory elements of a card scheme. Even with no requirement to carry or to produce a card on demand to the police, it is still in line with this statement to have a card scheme where it is compulsory to register one's information. A card scheme that requires an individual to inform the state of changes to her personal identity information, including changes of address is also in line with the Home Office's position at this time. Once again, the Home Secretary was very careful to rule out only a number of options for types of cards scheme, not the possibility of a card scheme all together.

The specific nature of the arguments for rejection and the reasons for the open policy stance towards to card schemes which did not require the holder to produce the document on request, suggests an active consideration of alternatives being undertaken at the time. Although clearly not central, or indeed an obvious policy priority, the debate around the

introduction of identity cards would on the basis of these data, not seem to be totally dead within the Government under the first Labour administration. The decision to consult, and then proceed with efforts to legislate is perhaps not therefore quite such an inexplicable shift in policy stance as was suggested by the literature (Agar, 2001),

Other areas of the policy elite in Britain were at this time interested in the potentials offered by a card scheme. For example, January 2001 saw the publication of the Select Committee on Home Affairs (HAC) First Report of the Session. Focusing on issues of immigration, the report called for the Government to examine the "pull factors" that attract migrants to the UK. Most interestingly, the Committee gave some consideration to the work of the 1996 Home Affairs Committee, who had argued that "[i]t is likely that only an identity card which was either compulsory or which carried details of immigration status would have an impact on preventing illegal immigration"'" (HAC, 1996, cited in HAC, 2001, p. 80). The 2001 Committee clearly saw some value in this idea. However, to avoid the public's "repugnance" of such schemes, the Committee suggested that the cards should be framed in terms of entitlements. These "entitlement cards" could then show the holders' nationality and immigration status, as well as demonstrate the holder's eligibility to access free public services. A focus on entitlement meant that the cards need not have any of the "sinister connotations in terms of civil liberties" that identity cards seemed to carry (HAC, 2001, p. 84).

The Government's reply to the Committee's suggestions for a review was clear yet unenthusiastic, stating that it was "unpersuaded" of the benefits (HAC, 2001, p.7). The introduction of a card scheme of the sort envisaged by the committee was seen to be "technically too complex", would increase the potential for personal fraud to be

perpetrated, and would be simply "too expensive". Moreover, the requirement that the public be compelled to pay for a card was seen as problematic.

Significantly, the "issue of public acceptability" remained "a major concern" (28 March 2001 - Fourth Special Report of Session 2000-01; HC 375). The reply to the Home Affairs Select Committee's suggestion was unequivocal, seeming firmly to close the door to a compulsory identity cards scheme.

Following the terrorist attacks in the US on 11th September 2001, media attention turned to the issue of identity cards as a national security measure. Over the first few months following the event, numerous newspaper articles in both tabloids and broadsheet papers discussed the possibility of their introduction. Parliament was recalled on the 14th September and the notion of the introduction of an identity card was raised several times from both sides of the House. Most notable was Peter Mandelson's calls for a re-examination of the "balance between civil liberties and the fight against terrorism" as part of a raft of suggestions for extending police powers (HC deb. 14th Sep, 2001). Although Mandelson was not in the Government at the time, his position as a senior Party figure makes this call significant.

Speaking on Radio 4's *Today Programme* (BBC, 2001) on the morning of the 14th September, David Blunkett MP, who had replaced Jack Straw as Home Secretary earlier that year, was asked about the Government's position on identity cards. As was noted in Chapter One, Blunkett indicated that although the Government would look at the idea again, the issues to be considered were much broader than security alone. This was the first indication from the Home Office that the issue of "entitlements" was to be linked to

any potential card scheme. The statement on BBC radio also marked the move towards a more open posture towards identity cards on the part of the Home Office under Blunkett.

On the 1st November 2001, in a written statement to Parliament, the Home Office formally announced the possible introduction of a card scheme.

> The Government have no plans to introduce a national identity card scheme as part of its response to the atrocities in the United States on 11 September. However, the policy is kept under review and the Government are considering whether a universal card which allowed people to prove their identity more easily and provided a simple way to access a range of public services would be beneficial. (Eagle, HC Written Answer, 7 Nov 2001, col. 322W)

Significantly, the language used is highly qualified. Efforts were made to clearly distinguish an "entitlement" card from an "identity" card, on the basis of a stated purpose for introduction. It is also significant that the Home Office chose to announce its plans, however tentative they might be, in response to a written question, rather than as some alternative, and more obvious form.

A number of further assurances were offered in the statement, as well as some suggestions for a number of possible uses to which the proposed scheme might be put.

> Such an entitlement card scheme could also help to combat illegal working which disproportionately affects the poorer sections of our society by undercutting the minimum wage and encouraging unscrupulous employers. It could also reduce fraud against individuals, public services and the private sector. The introduction of an entitlement card would be a major step and the Government would not proceed without consulting widely and considering all the views expressed very carefully. (Eagle, HC Written Answer, 7 Nov 2001, col. 322W)

The purported ambitions of this scheme very closely echoed the recommendations made by the HAC in their January 2001 report which, at the time, failed to convince the Home

Office of the worth of considering an entitlement cards scheme. Although no clear intention was signalled, the parliamentary statement maked clear that the introduction of a card system, albeit in the guise of an entitlement card, was once again being entertained as a potential policy option.

Little additional information was offered in this arena until the publication of a consultation document in July of the following year. The *Entitlement Cards and Identity Fraud: a consultation paper* Green Paper (Home Office, 2002b) marked the beginning of a six month consultation period. Parliamentary statements that accompanied the publication of this document sought to emphasis the Government's preference for "…a universal entitlement card…" for all British citizens and permanent residence (Ibid). Although Blunkett claimed to have "...an open mind on how a card scheme could operate…" (HC deb. 3 Jul 2002, col. 228), a scheme which incorporated a population wide element, combined with an official identity token, was clearly preferred. These tokens (a card) were to be linked to an underlying population-wide central register of personal identities, and would most likely be supported by biometrics. Public and private sector organisations would therefore be able to validate an individual's claims to a particular identity by using a validation service provided by the Home Office. The holders of entitlement cards, it was argued, would also benefit through the provision of a simple and secure means of confirming their identity. Assurances are once again given that "[i]t is not the Government's intention to go down the road of compulsion to carry" (Blunkett, HC deb. 3 Jul 2002, col. 234, Hansard, 2002).

Following the entitlement card consultation, the Home Office published its White Paper *Identity Cards: The Next Steps* in November 2003, and in doing so, sought to clearly

demonstrate the Government's intention to introduce legislation for a national identity card. Blunkett's statement to Parliament made this position, for the first time, clear and unambiguous.

The object of intention in the parliamentary arena – "means"

This part of the chapter presents the findings of the analysis carried out on data coded for "means". It draws on the parliamentary record, select committee hearing evidence, and interview transcripts. Data are coded for nature and timing for "means" of commitment. It also makes a qualitative assessment of the strength with which these "means" were demonstrated by applying the thresholds set out in table 3.1.

Throughout the parliamentary process, the Home Office was especially keen to emphasis a number of issues which it felt either definitely should, or should not, form part of the entitlement, and later, the identity cards scheme. Perhaps most significant was the issue of compulsion. Initial statement made by the Home Office about the proposed scheme talked of a "universal card" (Eagle, Hansard, 7 Nov 2001, col. 322W; Blunkett, 5 Feb 2002, col. 868W).

> Everyone would register for and be issued with such a card, which would be required for the purpose of gaining access to services or employment." (Blunkett, Hansard, June 2002, col. 228).

Beginning with the publication of the *Identity Cards: Next Steps* White Paper (Home Office 2003), and throughout the progress of the 2004 and 2005 identity cards bills, the emphasis shifted. From this point, the Home Office sought to highlight that registration

on the scheme was to be population wide and mandatory, with the cards being referred to as "compulsory". There to be "no exemptions from the scheme." (Blunkett, Hansard, 11 Nov 2003, col. 177). Indeed, the scheme's universality was seen to be vital for its integrity.

> That is what compulsory means: when it is introduced, there will be no exceptions, so no one can defraud the system or pretend to be someone else. (Blunkett, Hansard, 11th Nov 2003, col. 177)
>
> Nobody should vote for the ID card scheme unless they understand that it is compulsory. Let us put the debate out in the open and discuss the matter to make it easier for hon. Members to understand why it is progressing in such a way. (Browne, HC Standing Committee, 20th Jan 2005, col. 124)
>
> Let us be under no illusion that the Government intend to bring in a compulsory ID scheme; there is no stealth, no dishonesty and no masking of such a proposal. (Browne, HC Standing Committee, 20th Jan 2005, col. 124)

The intention that the scheme be applied to the whole population is consistent with the preferred position outlined in the original 2002 consultation document (Home Office, 2002). However, the language used to describe this aspect of the proposal represented a marked shift in the manner in which the Home Office sought to represent its intentions. The description of the proposed enrolment process for the scheme shifted from a more euphemistic "universal" to a much more direct "compulsory". Similarly, in response to the public consultation and negative reactions found in focus group research (see, COI/Home Office, 2003) the name of the scheme was changed from "entitlement cards", to "identity cards" with the publication of the White Paper (Home Office, 2003).

Throughout the early stages of policy's development, the Home Office was at various points keen to emphasise its views about the proposed scope of the scheme, the process of ensuring individuals registered on the scheme, and the issue of carrying and producing the

card when asked to do so by the police. As early as June 2002, the Home Office sought to make clear their preference for the type of enrolment process to be adopted.

> …there is a presumption that those who travel abroad and own and run a car, which is well over 40 million people, will automatically pick up the card, because they will need it to show that they are able and have permission to drive a car or are free to travel abroad. (Blunkett, HC deb. 2002, col. 233)

In 2002, the Home Office saw a link between identity cards and using passports and driving license applications as mechanisms for issuing the identity document. Moreover, ministerial statements suggested prohibitions on travel and the right drive for those not willing to register on the scheme. The Home Office's intentions towards the process of individuals on the scheme and the issuing of documents was by 2005, clearly articulate as being comprised of two separate stages, although the link with driving licenses was downplayed. As the statement below suggests, a strong preference for registration on the scheme to occur simultaneously with application for designated document was also present.

> As we will see as we go through the Bill and the structure of the scheme, people will be entered on the register as they apply for an identity card under the first phase of the scheme, whether in the context of a passport application or some other designated document. It will become compulsory to register only in the second phase of the scheme. (Browne, HC Standing Committee, 18 Jan 2005, col. 17)

Applications for designated documents- those documents linked to the scheme through the identity cards legislation- were to automatically enrol individuals into the National Identity Register (NIR) database on a compulsory basis. As the Home Office Minister Des Browne MP made clear.

> It is intended that there should be a coincidence between the entry in the register and the issue of the cards. It is not intended that the register will exist and people will not have cards. (Browne, HC Standing Committee, 18 Jan 2005, col. 17)

Clause 4 is the key to the delivery of the ID card scheme because it provides a mechanism by which individuals can be brought into the scheme. An application for a designated document will, in effect, trigger an application for an ID card. Browne, HC Standing Committee, 20th Jan 2005, col. 127)

The passport and identity card will be issued as a package and it will no longer be an option to obtain a passport on its own once it has been designated. (Baroness Scotland, HL Dec, March 2005, col. 51)

These statements underscored the strength with which the Government sought to demonstrate its intention that a link be established between a passport application, and inclusion within the NIR.

Although compulsory registration on the scheme was central to the design, quite possibly from its inception, Blunkett was equally clear that the Home Office did not envisage the compulsory carrying of the cards. Echoing Straw's pre September 11th concerns, the Home Office sought to clearly emphasise this aspect of its thinking, and was consistent in doing so throughout the scheme's development. The Home Secretary clearly wished to demonstrate his intentions on this issue, and sought to do so in Parliament.

In a parliamentary answer on 5 February, I ruled out a compulsory card scheme—compulsory in the sense that the card would have to be carried by each individual at all times. As I made clear, any scheme that was eventually approved would not entail police officers or other officials stopping people in the street to demand their card. We are not, therefore, consulting on that option. (Blunkett, HC, 3rd June 2002, col. 228)

It is not the Government's intention to go down the road of compulsion to carry. (Blunkett, HC deb. 3rd June 2002, col. 234)

Carrying the card, not the existence of the scheme or a requirement to enrol, was clearly seen as being most politically problematic. Some explanation is offered for this position, with Blunkett suggesting that the Government were not in favour of a compulsion to carry

because of "historic connotation" (Blunkett, HC deb. 3rd June 2002, col. 238). Presumably, this is reference to either the war time scheme, or else the experiences of certain groups in Europe under authoritarian regimes throughout the twentieth century.

The distinction between a requirement to carry the card and to produce the card continued to be emphasised. In 2004, the then Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, repeatedly stressed the point that "…we will not require people to carry the cards" (Clarke, Hansard, 20th Dec 2004, col. 1947). This point was also made on a number of occasions during Second Reading and Committee, most often in response to accusations from the Opposition that the cards would become compulsory to carry at a later stage.

> I must also make it clear that we have never proposed and do not propose a scheme under which it would be compulsory to carry a card (Clarke, HC deb. Dec 2004, col. 1950)

> I assure Members that this Bill does not contain any power for the police or CSOs to demand the registration number of any individual in any circumstances or to demand an identity card (Browne, SC deb. 18 Jan 2005, col. 17)

> It would drive us into relationships between individuals and the police that we have gone to significant lengths to move away from, especially in areas with a high number of ethnic minorities (Browne, SC deb. 25 Jan 2005, col. 302)

> I shall treat his interventions with a good deal more respect if he stops the canard of talking about the compulsory carrying of ID cards. That is not in the Bill. I should be enormously grateful if he saved such rhetoric for outside the Room (McNulty, SC deb. 6 July, 2005 col. 48).

Interestingly, despite the assurances of non compulsion to carry, a link was envisaged between the identity card system and the police. In his speech to the Commons in November 2003, Blunkett clearly believed that the Government should give the police access to the additional data generated by the scheme.

> …the ability to require acquisition of the card if they believe that someone has committed an act that amounts to an arrestable offence. That seems a perfectly

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sensible way forward, and with the use of new technology, the biometric could be taken in or out of the station. That is how we are currently developing the livescan system. (Blunkett, HC deb. Nov 2003, col. 179)

This hints towards a possible shift in thinking from that outlined 2002 when the routine use of the card by police was ruled out. Clarke, as Home Secretary in December 2004, offered more detail of how the Home Office's thinking on this issue had developed since the previous summer. Although stating that the Bill before Parliament contained no new powers "…to require the production of an identity card to the police…", it was seen as possible that,

> [t]he scheme will allow the police to check the fingerprints of those whom they are already entitled to fingerprint, such as those under arrest, against the records that are held on the national identity register. (Clarke, HC deb. 2004, col. 1952).

Although not an extension of existing powers, the register would still present the police with the opportunity to confirm an individual's claims to an identity under circumstances which were already set out in other legislation. However, there is evidence to suggest that thinking about police use of the scheme extended even further than this. Once again Clarke developed on a theme initially voiced by Blunkett in his November 2003 statement to Parliament. Echoing Blunkett's reference to the "livescan" scheme (use of mobile biometric scanning units by the Police and the UK Boarder Agency), Clarke's statements seem to suggest that in late 2004, the Home Office envisage that the police would in the future, be making use of such technology.

> We all carry our biometric information with us and there is therefore no need for people to have a card in their possession for the police to make that check. (Clarke, HC deb. 2004, col. 1952)

> For example, there is no power in the Bill to require production of an identity card to the police. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam will say that that is unnecessary because people will have their biometrics on them in any event, and he is right. (Browne, HC Standing Committee, 18 Jan 2005, col. 50)

On the view expressed above, the identity card itself is almost redundant for the sorts of crime prevention purposes alluded to at this stage in the process, either because of mobile scanning units, or else through the polices' use of the information available on the NIR, accessed through the Home Office. Moreover, some additional police uses of the proposed system were also alluded to by the Minister.

> …scenes of crime match can be compared with fingerprints in the register if there is no match from the police's national system of fingerprints. (Browne, SC deb. 25 Jan 2005, col. 300)

Once again, aspiration for the "means" by which the object of the Government's intention are to be achieved, rest on the assumption that biometric technology can provide a secure and reliable means to check identities against a central database. This is an aspiration which is qualified as the scheme progresses.

> The argument is clear. The main strength of the biometric system is that individuals can only register their personal details once, because they have only one set of biometrics to register. Terrorist networks around the world rely and thrive on the use of multiple identities. They use multiple travel documents and passports. Tackling that is one of the Bill's key strengths. (Burnham, HC deb. 18 Oct 2005, col. 742)

Given the reliance of much of the aspiration for the scheme on having a definitive account of the resident population's personal identities, together with a stated belief in the robustness of biometric technology, it is understandable that the Home Office might wish to be clear about the requirement that the scheme be compulsory. Moreover, as will be show in the following section, this belief might also give greater insight to the Government's insistence during parliamentary debates on the retention of the link between designated documents and registration on the NIR.

The data also suggest that the Home Office's thinking placed a great deal of importance in having a population-wide and definitive database, with identities clearly linked to specific individuals. This disallows the possibility of an individual's "official" identity not being known to the Government. The aspirations put forward by the Home Office relating to the use of the card as crime prevention and detection tools do not require the individual to produce a card on request.

The Home Office's stance on compulsion to register was strongly demonstrated from the very beginning of the policy process, despite compulsion to carry being ruled out early on. A number of reasons were cited by the Home Office to explain this position, with most relating to the civil liberties implications and public acceptability of such a requirement. Interestingly however, the perceived benefits available to the state which might accrue as a result of individuals having to carry the card were thought to be available anyway. This is because of the great confidence with which successive Home Office ministers placed their trust in biometric technology. Moreover, a wide range of other functions suggested by the Home Office made use of the administrative data collected and stored on the central database. Following this line of thinking, the card was essentially superfluous for all but a small number of proposed functions i.e. establishing one's identity in low value transactions. The Government's intention that individuals would not be required to carry the card actually seems to be a rather empty concession.

The Home Office, and later, once the legislation was before Parliament, the Government, sought to demonstrate their intention to two separate strands of the identity cards policy. These were the "means" offered for achieving stated policy objectives, and as well as a series of "ends" or aspirations for the policy. As discussed above, some of the more important "means" appealed to were:

- Identity cards were to be issued to the whole of the resident population, i.e. to be universal.

- The cards were to be supported by a population register of personal information, including biometrics (NIR).

- The cards were to be issued in conjunction with certain other "designated" documents (although the precise specification for these documents changed over time).

- Importantly, it was never an option for individuals to be required to carry an identity card, or produced that card on demand to the police.

- A quantity of the data contained on the NIR would be shared with other government agencies in the interests of national security and for the prevention and detection of crime.

The object of intention in the parliamentary arena – "ends"

At various times, Home Office Ministers sought to demonstrate the intention that the scheme would be used to achieve certain "ends" within policy fields. In turn, the ability of the scheme to exert some control in those policy fields was called upon to form part of the justification for its introduction. These different policy fields included the prevention and detection of crime; frauds relating to the misrepresentation of identity including crimes of money laundering etc. as well as personal bank account takeovers and credit card frauds; national security including the prevention and detection of terrorism; illegal immigration and working; the administration of public services; and the increased convenience for the

public through being able to prove one's own identity to a high standard, and to promote a shared sense of citizenship. At different times throughout the process, the Government privileged the demonstration of certain of these intentions over others in the parliamentary arena.

The following section of the chapter presents the analysis of data, coded for timing, strength and object of commitment, specifically with respect to demonstrations of intention towards "ends".

National Security

In the months following the terrorist attacks of Sept 11th 2001, the Home Secretary was careful to distance the introduction of an identity system from the issue of national security, arguing instead that adoption of such a scheme would need to be considered in much broader terms. As has been noted earlier, the Government had "…no plans to introduce a national identity card scheme as part of its response to the atrocities in the United States on 11 September." (Eagle, HC Written Answer, 7 Nov 2001, col. 322W). Instead the Home Office was interested in the possibilities offered by the introduction of an "entitlement card". By July the following year, this clear stance seemed to have softened. The issue of the prevention of terrorism began to creep into the statements made by the Home Secretary. However, the link between identity cards and prevention of terrorism was not to feature strongly in the debate.

> Yes, I accept that it is important that we do not pretend that an entitlement card would be an overwhelming factor in combating international terrorism (Blunkett, HC deb. 2 July, 2002, col. 232)

> I accept that massive claims for cards have been made that have not been reaped, but I have not made such claims, including ruling out their substantial contribution to countering terrorism. (Blunkett, HC deb. 2 July, 2002, col. 237)

Coinciding with the publication of the Government's White Paper, *Identity Cards: Next Steps,* (Home Office, 2003), the Home Office dramatically changed its argument about identity cards being used as a national security measure. By this stage, the link between preventing individuals from establishing a false identity and the prevention of terrorism was strongly articulated. For the Home Secretary, the failure to introduce a system of the sort proposed by the Home Office would place the UK in serious danger of attack.

> …obvious that terrorist networks would target the countries that had made the least progress in developing the capacity to provide this protection." (Blunkett, HC deb. Nov 2003, cols, 172).

> "I said in my statement that the security services had informed me that they thought that the card would be valuable. They did so because a third of known terrorists and terrorist network supporters use multiple identities in this country in order to ply their dreadful trade by raising money and providing support" (Blunkett, HC deb. Nov 2003, cols, 172 and 176).

Although not as strongly pronounced as some of the other aspirations put forward by the Government, the period following the publication of the *Next Steps* White Paper (Home Office, 2003) saw a significant increase in terms of the strength with which the Home Office sought to demonstrate its intention for the scheme to be used to prevent terrorist activity. This continued throughout the Bill's passage through Parliament following its introduction in December of 2004. Clarke, in particular sought to assert the potential for the proposed card scheme to fight terrorism. Drawing on advice and information from sources within the Security Services, the Home Secretary offered a number of concrete

figures to highlight the severity of the issue, and the potential for the card scheme to make

an impact.

> A third of terrorist activities make use of false identities and we need an identification process to deal with that. (Clarke, HC deb. 2004, col. 1945)

> …security forces in countries throughout the world recognise that a system of identification of this kind will help them in the challenges that they face, which are very serious.... (Clarke, HC deb. 20 Dec 2004. col. 1946)

For the Home Secretary, following the cards introduction, "[n]ational security will be

improved" (Clarke, HC deb. Dec 2004, col. 1955). Although stopping short of arguing

that identity cards would solve all of the issues associated with terrorism, the Home

Secretary did suggest that "…they will help to solve them, and that is why we should

support them (Clarke, 20 Dec 2004, col. 1946). This pattern was repeated in the Lords,

where there was "…no doubt that the introduction of identity cards will help the police

and security services in their work." (Baroness Scotland, HL deb. Mar 2005 col. 50).

The strategy of emphasising the national security value of the scheme continued as the

Bill was reintroduced following the May 2005 General Election. On Second Reading in

the Lords, Home Office Minister Baroness Scotland even went as far as to draw a link

between arguments for identity cards, and the group which claimed responsibility for the

September 11th attacks against the USA.

> Jean-Louis Bruguière, France's top counter-terrorism investigator—it was reported in *The Times* on 1 June—claimed that identity cards would help Britain to protect itself from terrorist attacks. The head of Interpol said that in cases of terrorism multiple identities have been used by terrorists" (Clarke, HC deb. 28 Jun 2005, col. 1167).

> "We have been advised that more than one third of terrorist suspects are known to have used false identities. Indeed, al-Qaeda's training manual requires its

> operatives to acquire false identities to hide their terrorist activities. (Baroness Scotland, HL deb. 31 Oct 2005, col. 14).

> I am sure that the noble Lord will remember the extracts from the al-Qaeda manual that said that one of the principal tasks was to acquire multiple identities. (Baroness Scotland, HL Committee 12 Dec 2005, col. 1071)

By appealing to external sources of authority, such as Interpol and the Security Services, as well as invoking the name of al-Qaeda, the Minister sought to reinforce the strength of the argument being made. If a link could be definitively established, then the Government's intention to use the cards in such a manner serves as a justification for the wider issue of the scheme's introduction in the first place.

Government's demonstration of their intention to utilise the proposed cards scheme in the field of national security was initially explicitly downplayed. However, its significance within the framework of the Government aspirations for the cards grew as the Bill progressed through Parliament. Over this period, Home Office Ministers sought increasingly to associate the scheme with national security functions on the basis of expert advice. Despite a brief dip during Second Reading in the Commons, the emphasis on the link between the card scheme and prevention of terrorism was clearly established and remained a central aspect of Home Office Minister's discourse over much of the rest of the process.

Identity Fraud

In contrast to the Government's intentions towards the cards and terrorism, the link drawn between the proposed scheme and identity fraud played a central role from the beginning of the policy process in this arena. The issue of identity fraud was appealed to with the

greatest degree of authority during the Home Secretary's statement to Parliament on the day of the publication of the *Entitlement Cards and Identity Fraud* Green Paper (Home Office, 2002b). Blunkett sought to establish the severity of the problem of identity fraud by drawing on statistics revealed in a Cabinet Office study on identity fraud which was published at the same time (Cabinet Office, 2002). By employing strong language and through repetition, the Home Secretary sough to link the benefits of the identity system with countering identity fraud.

> …each year, thousands of people have their identities stolen by criminals, often without their knowing about it. Bank accounts are raided, and goods and services bought in their name. Identity fraud now amounts to £1.3 billion a year. (Blunkett, HC deb. June, 2002, col. 229)

> If we are left behind, if we do not have a debate, and if, over the next two years, the House is not prepared to decide which way we will go, not only will we be left behind, but organised fraudsters across the world will know one thing: we will be the weakest link. (Blunkett, HC deb. June 2002, col. 231)

Following the initial enthusiasm for the perceived benefits of the card scheme for fraud prevention, the Home Office's representations of its aspirations for the scheme fell back a little throughout 2003. Nevertheless, a consistent line was offered by Blunkett in the Commons. The Home Secretary sought to highlight the opportunity presented by identity cards to strengthen the security of identities as well as the seriousness of the risk faced from these types of fraud. However, at this time, the centrality of the aspiration within the overall framework was much reduced. Arguments remained at the level of general threats to the prosperity of the nation as a whole, rather than focusing the threat at the level of the individual actor. By Second Reading in the Commons in autumn 2004, the importance of identity fraud as a government aspiration for the scheme was represented much less strongly, and was sustained by only a small number of references to the overall cost to the economy of different types of impersonation fraud.

By the time the 2005 Bill was reintroduced after the May General Election, this strand of the arguments for the cards had changed in character. Identify fraud was still focused upon as a significant issue for the individual. It was not, however, fraud it its own right that was the central issue, but instead, the implications of that fraud for the individual. It was on this basis that the Government sought to justify their intention for the scheme.

> In 2004, an average of 50,000 people in the UK were victims of impersonation fraud. On average, it takes each victim 60 hours to resolve their case and clear their name (Clarke, HC deb. June 2005, col. 1166)

As the proposals progressed through Parliament, the link between the prevention of fraud, and undermining other types of criminal activity grew. Identity fraud was not represented as an isolated issue, but rather, one which impacted on many areas of crime prevention. The identity card scheme would, for example, serve humanitarian ends, such as the prevention of enforced prostitution, or human trafficking, as these crimes were facilitated by misrepresenting identity.

> If we look at the issues of people trafficking, there is absolutely no doubt: if we talk to those in any police organisation in the world, they will say that identity fraud, first, by the gangs who run such trafficking and, secondly, by the people who are being trafficked is a central weapon of their crime, and we should do everything that we can to stop that happening (Clarke, HC deb. June 2005, col. 1669).

> Last week, on Tuesday 11 October, *Metro* revealed that a fraudster who created 130 false identities to swindle hundreds of banks out £1.1 million was jailed for five and a half years. Identity fraud is not a figment of our imagination. (Burnham, HC deb. 18 Oct 2005, col. 742).

By 2005, the focus had shifted from the act of identity fraud itself, to the issues associated with the ability to carry out the act of gaining a false identity in the first place. Identity fraud was presented as being at the root of a wide range of crimes.

Prevention and detection of crime

Over the course of the parliamentary process, Home Office ministers argued that the scheme should play a role in the detection and prevention of crime. Initially focusing only on "serious crimes", the emphasis in Home Office statements shifted so that by 2003, "routine" types of criminal offence were also presented as a justification for introduction.

> …ability to require acquisition of the card if they believe that someone has committed an act that amounts to an arrestable offence. That seems a perfectly sensible way forward, and with the use of new technology, the biometric could be taken in or out of the station (Blunkett, HC deb. Nov 2003, col. 176).

Having made very little mention hither to, Clarke stated his belief that the point of the scheme was predominantly one of crime prevention. As the Bill progressed, the importance of crime prevention as an aspiration began to grow. Although not demonstrated as strongly as either "fraud" or "national security", by the time of Second Reading in 2004, it was being claimed that the "national identification base of the kind that is set up in the scheme will lead to serious policing advantages" (Clarke, HC deb. Dec 2004, col. 1947). Moreover, much more was made of the link between the prevention of the acquisition of false identities, and the crimes that are able to be perpetrated as a result. The Home Office Minister was keen emphasise the usefulness of the scheme for a range of issues.

> …far easier to address the vile trafficking in vulnerable human beings, which ends in appalling tragedies, and the exploitative near slave labour or forced prostitution that exists as a result of the traffic in people. (Blunkett, HC deb. Dec 2004, col. 1945)

> …it is one of the most effective means of attacking the people trafficking that leads to near-slave labour in many parts of this country. ID cards will help us to do that, and those who oppose the Bill need to face up to that fact. (Blunkett, HC deb. Dec 2004, col. 1950)

> The police themselves are very clear that having a national identification base of the kind that is set up in the scheme will lead to serious policing advantages for them. (Clarke, HC deb. 20 Dec 2004, col. 1947)

Taken together, the statements offered above present the Home Office's position clearly on the impact of identity cards for the prevention of crime. In contrast, in the Lords, the Minister did not attempt to make the case for the card, but instead sought to draw a boundary around the access to data that police would have. A distinction was also drawn in the legislation, and in the parliamentary debate, between serious crime and what might be called "normal" or "routine" crime. This was relevant for the purpose of access to audit trail data that the police would have been allowed. Although arguing that "…[i]t is essential that the prevention of crime remains one of the statutory purposes of the scheme." (NcNulty, HC Standing Committee, 6 July 2005, col. 53), this aspect of the Government's aspirations largely fell out of debate in terms of providing a rationale for its inclusion. The debate around this issue took place at the level of the limitation to be placed on data access for the police, not on the capacity of the system to offer crime prevention benefits. The Government's demonstration of its intention for the scheme to be used in relation to serious and organised crime, or "normal" crime, was rather muted in both houses of parliament.

Illegal immigration and working

In a similar fashion to the strength of the Government's presentation of its aspirations for dealing with identity fraud, the issue of addressing illegal immigration and illegal working was put forwards as a central or a "crucial" aspiration for the scheme in its early stages in Parliament.

> Crucially, an entitlement card could help us to tackle illegal working. Illegal working undermines the minimum wage and the rights and conditions of the lowest paid. (Blunkett, HC deb. Nov 2003, col. 228)

Blunkett sought to link illegal immigration very directly to illegal working. As Blunkett's statement suggests, it is clear that the Home Office, at this stage in the process, sought to demonstrate an imperative that was both social and economic for addressing the practice of illegal working, and to which the scheme was presented as providing a means of addressing.

> An entitlement card could give businesses and employees a simple, straightforward and verifiable way of establishing the right to work legally. It could thereby assist us in tackling the sub-economy. (HC deb. 3 Jul 2002, col. 227)

The issue was, however, relegated during Second Reading to an almost peripheral concern, and continued as such throughout the remainder of the 2004-05 Session. Government aspirations to use the scheme as a means of addressing the issue of illegal immigration did not feature at all during the March 2005 Second Reading of the first Identity Cards Bill in the Lords, where security issues were privileged instead. This situation continued after the Bill's reinstatement in the summer of 2005 with the control of illegal immigration and working once again being included, but only in the broadest terms as the Home Secretary recited the proposed benefits of the scheme's introduction, before going on the give more specific emphasis to other aspects of the proposals.

> The benefits to society include more effective crime fighting in a wide variety of ways; reducing serious and organised crime, people trafficking, money laundering and drug dealing; and reducing illegal migration and benefit fraud (Clarke, HC deb. 28 June 2005, col. 1167)

The link between illegal immigration and working was still retained, but again, not given as great an emphasis as other aspirations for the scheme voiced at the same time, or on other occasions closer to the beginning of the parliamentary process, when illegal immigration was given a higher priority.

> It provides a means for everyone legally resident in the UK to assert their right to be in the country and to help them gain access to the services to which they are entitled. (Clarke, HC deb. June 2005, col. 801)

The particular formulation of expression links the scheme in its final incarnation to the arguments put forward earlier on in the process, which dealt with the issue if illegal immigration in terms of an emphasis on establishing an "entitlement" to a particular public service. This aspect of the rationale for linking legal residence with entitlement and rights was picked up, and continued in the Lords on Second Reading in October 2005. Greater emphasis was given to these arguments as the Home Office Minister represents biometric identity cards as "…a major deterrent to illegal immigration." (Scotland, HL deb. Oct 2005, col. 15). Not only were the cards to confirm identity, but also an individual's "right to reside" in the UK (Ibid). This link between illegal immigration and working was identified as "One of the key pull factors for illegal immigrants." (Scotland, HC deb. Oct 2005, col. 14). The much stronger emphasis on this strand of the argument for introduction, together with the re-established concern with identity cards as a mechanism for establishing rights and entitlements, echoed the Government's former intention that the scheme should address these areas.

Administration of public services

Unlike other categories of aspiration for the scheme which the Government sought to represent at different times, the category of improvements to the administration of public

service did not feature as prominently in its discourse as other justifications. Moreover, whereas crime, security, immigration and fraud were all at one time or another, the most, or one of the most strongly emphasised aspiration, this was not the case for potential public service uses for the scheme. The aspirations for the scheme to be used in this way were a back ground concern.

> Everyone would register for and be issued with such a card, which would be required for the purpose of gaining access to services or employment. (Blunkett, HC deb. 3 Jul 2002, col. 228)

> …there should be links to electoral registration. (Blunkett, HC deb. Nov 2003, col. 181)

> The final public interest is to secure the efficient and effective provision of public services. (Baroness Scotland, HL deb. March 2005, col. 51)

> …when seeking access to a public service, such as free health treatment or applying for the payment of state benefits, an individual should be asked to produce an identity card that confirms his or her identity as a first step in proving entitlement to the service. (Scotland, HL deb. Oct 2005, col. 15)

Where firm aspirations for the scheme with respect to improving the delivery of free public services are mentioned, the language used by the Government is much less definitive. Both the Home Secretary and the Home Office Minister in the Lords, Baroness Scotland, failed to link the idea of improved public service provision with the introduction of an identity card in a definitive way. The language used suggested that firm arrangements have not been made, either during Second Reading of the 2004-05 Bill in the Commons, or later, during the Second Reading in the Lords of the 2005-06 Bill. No doubt, this reflects a number of issues relating to the development of the scheme, as well as the way the Home Office specifically, envisage the scheme to be picked up by other government departments as the role out of the scheme progresses. However, the lack of emphatic language presented an impression of the Government was not willing to

demonstrate, in a clear and unequivocal way, its intention that the scheme be used to aid

the rationalisation of the administration of public services.

Convenience for the individual and promotion of citizenship

The notion that a system for establishing the identity of citizens and legal residents would

be convenient for the users was an idea which found currency during the Entitlement

Card consultation period and then again during the Second Reading and Report Stage of

the *Identity Cards Bill 2005* in the Commons. At other times, this aspect of the

Government's aspirations for the scheme received very little attention.

> …given that to drive a car, move freely in and out of the country, open a bank account or obtain credit, we need to identify ourselves correctly, would it be easier or harder if there was one entitlement card to assist the process? (Blunkett, HC deb. June 2002, col. 229)

> I agree that it would be a very positive way to welcome and embrace people's right to gain access to services, to develop their citizenship and to be part of the mutuality that we share. (Blunkett, HC deb. June 2002, col. 239)

> It will be a benefit to the individual to be able to make clear their identity in financial transactions—for example, opening bank accounts and in a wide range of other transactions—without having to produce a series of proxy documentation. (Clarke, HC deb. June 2005, col. 1166).

> …to have a card will be of major benefit in terms of international travel, … Access to public services, as decided by those service providers, whether a library or any other form of public service, is another example of such a benefit. (Clarke, HC deb. June 2005, col. 1166)

The analysis in this section of the thesis has made the argument that the Government's

intention towards "ends" was subject to considerable change over the period of analysis.

Figure 4.1, overleaf, shows how the strength with which the main justifications were put

forward were subject to change over time.

Figure 4. 1 Strength of demonstration of object of intention - "ends"

Document	Date	Source	Individual	Aspirations for identity cards scheme							
				Normal	Serious	Fraud	Security	Immigration	Admin	Convenience	Citizen
Entitlement cards Statement to Parliament	Jul-02	Hansard	Blunkett								
Next Steps Statement to parliament	Nov-03	Hansard	Blunkett								
PLP Briefing	Apr-04	Official publication	Blunkett Browne Blears Mactaggart								
Identity Cards Bill 2004/05 Commons Second reading	Dec-04	Hansard	Clarke								
Identity Cards Bill 2004/05 Lords Second reading	Mar-05	Hansard	Scotland								
Identity Cards Bill 2005/06 Commons Second reading	Jun-05	Hansard	Clarke								
Identity Cards Bill 2005/06 Remaining Stages	Oct-05	Hansard	Clarke								
Identity Cards Bill 2005/06 Lords Second reading	Oct-05	Hansard	Scotland								

The darker shaded areas highlight the points at which greater emphasis was given to those aspects of the overall aspirations for the scheme. The diagram therefore shows how the different aspirations offered by the Government have shifted over the course of the proposals. Dealing with the perceived problem of immigration as well as identity fraud were initially the most important issue the scheme was to address. This then shifted to the issue of security. As the process continued, the issues of security, the prevention of crime, and providing a convenient means for the citizen to prove their identity became the issue that was focused on most strongly.

2. Capacity

This section discusses the points at which the Government sought to utilise its capacity to commit in the Parliamentary arena. The prose presented in this section draws on data coded for the utilisation of specific "hard" and "soft" resources and the context within which they were put to use so as allow the Government to further its ambitions.

In the parliamentary arena, the Government has the ability to control the business of the House of Commons, through the use of Allocation of Time motions, and Guillotine motions. These offer the Government a powerful technique for achieving control over the agenda. Indeed, time is a specific finite resource on which the Government can draw, and much of Parliament is arranged around its distribution

Government sought to impose programme motions on three separate occasions during the 2004-05 Bill, and a further four times during the 2005-06 Bill. On the 2004-05 Bill, the Government sought to utilise its ability by imposing a timetable for the allocation of time during Standing Committee debate on the Bill after "consultation with the usual channels". However, this was amendment on 18th January with a further motion to segment the debate. Browne argued that,

> Some experienced Committee members are adept at staying in order while using time for the least productive purpose; outstanding examples of that skill were displayed towards the end of last Thursday's sitting. (Browne, SC deb. 25 Jan 2005, col. 250)

The Government used its majority to force an agreement on this motion, thereby constraining the amount of time available within which the debate might to take place. A further programme motion was moved on Third Reading of the Bill in the Commons,

where once again, the Government made use of its numerical advantage to force an agreement on the limited timetable for debate on the Bill's clauses (HC deb. 10 Feb 2005, col. 1673). A similar pattern was repeated as the 2005-06 Bill passed through Parliament. An initial programme for the debate was agreed during the first sitting of the Standing Committee which was debating the clauses of the Bill, with the Minister warning that although the debate was not scheduled to be segmented,

> …as I have been told by my Whip, and as an ex-Whip I listen to her, we reserve the right to introduce them should progress not be as forthcoming as we want. I hope that we shall progress without them… (McNulty, SC D, 5 July, 2005, col. 5)

This threat was made good, when on Tuesday 12th July 2005, the Government introduced a motion to segment the remaining time available to debate the Bill's clauses (McNulty, SC deb. 12th July. 2005, col. 150). Additionally, Programme Motions were introduced on two further occasions – on Third Reading of the Bill in the Commons (HC deb. 18 Oct 2005, col. 709), and again on consideration of the discussion of the Lord's amendments on 13th February (HC deb. 13Feb 2006, col. 1144). Interestingly, of the six occasions when Government debated Lords amendments, and could have sought to curtail the debate in a similar fashion, only one of these opportunities was taken.

3. Assets at Hazard

As the concept formation process in Chapter Two made clear, a central necessary condition of commitment is that government are willing to put its assets at hazard in order to achieve the object of their intention. This section of the chapter is concerned with the nature and extent of those resources being utilised. It is also interested in understanding

the context of resource utilisation, and the perceptions of the principal actors in this arena with respect to risk.

As was discussed in the previous section, time is a valuable commodity in the Commons. Because the Government has, to a large extent, a monopoly on its distribution, the decision to legislate on a particular item of policy represents a clear decision to mobilise a scarce resource in an effort to achieve an end. Because time is scarce, risks in the form of opportunity costs are closely associated with its utilisation. The greater the time an item of legislation occupies in Parliament, the greater are the opportunity costs associated with it. To address this issue, the figure below offers some comparative data on the total number of parliamentary hours required by all of the Home Office legislation before it received Royal Assent, over the two years from the start of the parliamentary session in 2004.

Figure 4.2 Parliamentary time spent on Home Office legislation 2004-06
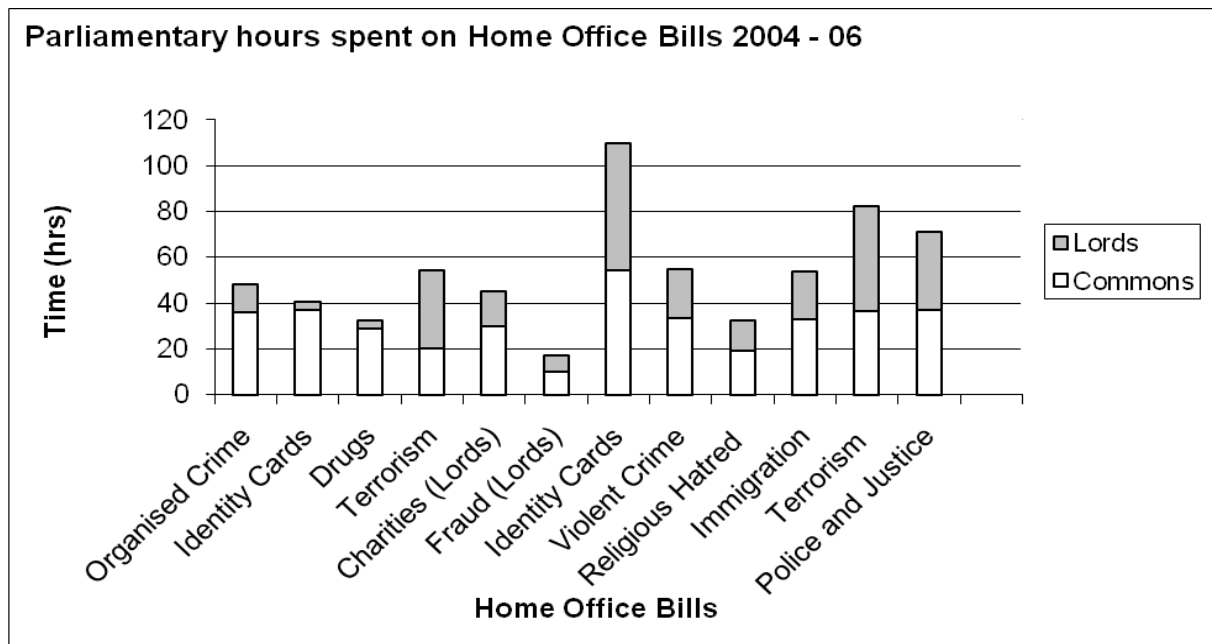
Data for this table was compiled from the Hansard record of timings of debates on the parliamentary website. The chart shows the Bills introduced by the Home Office in the parliamentary sessions 2004-5 and 2005-6, organised chronologically. In these very broad terms, the *Identity Cards Bill 2005* required a total of 109.8 hours of parliamentary time before it received Royal Assent, in comparison with, for example, the Terrorism Bill 2005, and the Police and Justice Bill 2005, which required 82.5 and 71.2 hours of legislative time respectively.

It should be noting from the outset that direct comparisons between the two Identity Cards Bills along these dimensions is not warranted because parliamentary time for the first Bill was cut short by the General Election. Moreover, the figure represents a very crude measure for "assets at hazard". The measure of "total time", for example, might

simply reflect a bill's complexity. Nevertheless, it is clear from these data that in terms of Home Office bills across the two parliaments, the identity cards legislation required much greater resource expenditure than any other comparable item of legislation, in respect of time. A closer analysis shows that much of this additional time was taken up by the length of the standing committee debates (over thirty hours of sitting time). Although this is slightly longer than comparable legislation, given the complexity and technical nature of this particular bill, it is not an entirely surprising statistic.

On the other hand, the comparison of time spent on legislation in Parliament is still useful for understanding the nature of the Government's behaviour on this dimension of the definition. Of particular interest is the disproportionate amount of time required for the consideration of amendments made by the other House before the legislation was given Royal Assent. The requirement to spend this additional time is generated as a direct result of disagreements between the two Houses over particular aspects of the Bill. A total of 4.2 hrs and 8.6 hrs for the Commons and the Lords respectively were required for this process. This is almost double the time (2.1hrs and 4. 2hrs respectively) required by the Commons and the Lords to consider the other House's amendments during the passage of the Terrorism Bill (2006), which was a highly controversial item of legislation in its own right. Importantly, the largest amount of time required was in the Lords, where the Government did not have an overall majority, and had to rely on the support of the other political parties or cross-bench peers to gain the chambers' acquiescence. If a government is unable to gather enough support, and without the ability to influence the distribution of time in the chamber, a government must be willing to grant concessions, or else rely on its authority, or else on the constitutional position of the lower house, in order to pass its legislation. Cowley (2005) makes the point that because of the expectation of a more

difficult time in the Lords, ministers purposefully retain a number of key *concessions* that they can "allow" or "give", to placate the Lords. This suggests a relationship between the ability to utilise specific resources, and an exposure to risk. In those areas where the Government is unable to exercise the capacity to dictate the distribution of time, it must risk the potential escalation of costs. By contrast, when the Government is able to utilise its resources in a way which allows for the ability to control allocation of time, the Government is more able to mitigate this exposure to risk through, for example, dictating the terms of the debate, or the time available in which to debate.

The willingness of the Lords to exercise their ability to delay legislation is a significant aspect of the politics of commitment in this case study. The slowing down of the process of the passage of legislation through the formal legislative apparatus of the state places great pressure on the Government. It forces a requirement to offer compromises in the Lords or else commit time and authority to force through items of legislation. Additional expenditure of time in the Lords represents a real and significant risk to the Government in terms of a requirement to mobilise the resource of time in a way that is not directly manageable. As this Bill was introduced at the beginning of a new Parliament, it is unlikely that it would run out of legislative time. However, the opportunity costs of persisting with the legislation imply that a different piece of legislation might well have had to be sacrificed in the future.

Another area in which the Government was forced to hazard its assets was when dealing with potential rebellions from its own backbenches. The voting behaviour of the House of Commons tested the authority of the Government on a number of occasions. Generally, although the direct role of an MP in the making of public policy is marginal, MPs

collectively have the capacity to constrain a government's legislative ambitions (Norton, 2005). This fact can be used to persuade the Government towards a particular course of action, achieved through lobbying, and ultimately, through an MPs' willingness to exercise their ability to withdraw their support for a policy, either by publicly speaking out against it, or by voting against the Government in Parliament (Ibid). The perception of the symbolic damage that such expressions of party disunity might inflict are strongly felt, and necessitates close attention to the management of potentially rebellious backbench MPs on the part of the Whips Office (Cowley and Stuart, 2005). The potential for a significant backbench rebellion is therefore a real risk faced by the Government, which brings with it the potential to undermine the Government's authority.

As the table 4.2 below shows, the Government asked its backbench MPs to vote five times for different aspects of the 2004 Bill. In total, twenty six MPs voted against Government on different aspects of the legislation. On each of the occasions when the Government asked its backbenchers to vote, it was exposed to the risk of rebel backbench MPs inflicting a defeat. This was all the more salient given the close proximity of the General Election. A defeat and the associated challenge to the Government's authority at such close proximity to the election would have been particularly keenly felt. Of those MPs who rebelled, many only exercised their ability to do so on just one vote (Cowley and Stuart, 2005). The table 4.2 below shows the distribution of Labour votes for each of the divisions on both of the identity cards bill. The table lists all of those MPs who rebelled against the Government on some aspect of the legislation on the occasions of a vote. The voting record and analysis on the website *Revolts*.com (Cowley and Stuart, 2006) has been used to identify those MPs for whom rebellion is unusual. These

individuals have been highlighted in the table with an asterisk. Similarly, abstentions from voting, a significant issue in itself, are identified by an "A".

Table 4.2 Labour backbench over the Identity Cards Bill 2004-05 and 2005-06

Name	Identity Cards Bill 2004 - 28 June 2005			Identity cards Bill 2005 - 18 October 2005					
	2nd Reading Div.20	Prog. No. 1 Div. 21	Money Div. 22	Prog. No. 3 timetable Div. 55	Recommit to committee Div. 56	Limit use of register/ proof Div. 57	Link with passport Div. 58	ID card free of charge Div. 59	3rd Reading Div. 60
Diane Abbott	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
Martin Caton*	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
Michael Clapham*	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	X
Katy Clark*	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Michael Connarty	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
Frank Cook*	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jeremy Corbyn	X	X	X	-	-	X	-	X	X
David Drew*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
Gwyneth Dunwoody	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
Mark Fisher	X	X	-	-	X	X	X	X	X
Paul Flynn*	X	X	-	-	-	-	X	X	X
Neil Gerrard	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	-	X
Ian Gibson*	-	X	-	-	-	-	X	X	X
David Hamilton*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-
Kate Hoey	X	X	-	-	X	-	X	X	X
Kelvin Hopkins	X	X	X	-	-	-	X	X	X
Glenda Jackson	X	X	-	-	-	X	X	-	X
Lynne Jones	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gerald Kaufman*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	A	-
Andy Love*	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
Bob Marshall-Andrews	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
John McDonnell	X	X	-	-	-	X	X	X	X
Austin Mitchell*	-	X	-	-	-	X	-	-	-
Albert Owen*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
Linda Riordan*	X	X	-	-	X	-	X	-	X
Clair Short (whilst Lab)	X	X	-	X	X	X	X	X	X
Alan Simpson	X	X	-	-	-	X	X	X	X
Dennis Skinner	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
Geraldine Smith*	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	X	X
John Smith*	X	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	X
David Taylor	A	X	-	-	-	-	X	-	X
Bob Wareing	X	X	-	-	-	-	X	X	X

(Table adapted from Revolts.com, Cowley and Stuart, 2006)

In the 2004-05 parliament, the data show that the larges rebellions occurred on Second and Third Reading votes, when nineteen backbenchers voted against the Government. When compared with other Labour rebellions, we can see that this is a rather small figure.

For example, votes on Iraq, top-up fees, and Foundations Hospitals attracted rebellions of 139, 72 and 62 respectively (Cowley and Stuart, 2004). Indeed at the time, the identity cards Second Reading rebellion way only 16th on the list of rebellions since 2001, suggesting only a modest degree of risk to the Government's authority on this issue (Ibid).

Moreover, the profile of those Labour MPs who rebelled shows them to be predominantly those MPs who tend to rebel on frequent occasions. Their status as "usual suspects" downplays the impact of their rebellion on the Government's authority, as there is a presumption that they will rebel under many circumstances (Cowley, 2005). Their propensity to exercise their ability to cast a dissenting vote has undermined their credibility in the eyes of the Government, and to some extent, their Labour colleagues. The fact of their voting against the Government means much less than had other MPs decided to vote in a similar way. They have undermined their capacity to influence government decision and become marginalised political actors. Given these parliamentary conditions, the risk posed by these moderate rebellions and the profile of those who rebelled presented few risks to the authority of the Government. On this measure of "assets at hazard", perhaps because of the immediacy of the coming election, the Government was not required to mobilise resources to a great extent, and the hazard was minimal.

On Labour's return to Government, the second *Identity Cards Bill* (2005) was introduced to Parliament soon afterwards on the 25th May 2005. The Labour Party's manifesto included a commitment to introduce the identity cards programme. The 2005 Bill was presented in a rather different parliamentary environment. Labour had won its third term

with a much reduced, yet still comfortable parliamentary majority. Moreover, the Conservative party had changed its leadership from Michael Howard who had supported the card scheme, to David Cameron who was firmly against the policy. Of most concern to Conservative MPs were the civil liberties implications of the proposed legislation. For many Conservatives, the "…proposals represented a fundamental shift in the balance of power between the citizen and the state." (Davis, 28 Jun 2005, col. 1173). For other Conservative members, the policy,

> …imposes obligations on the citizen and gives rights to the state, which should happen only when there is a dire and dark emergency, such as in war. (Hogg, HC deb. 28 Jun 2005. col. 1198)

The Liberal Democrat's position was similarly concerned with the civil liberties implications of the Bill, as well as the potential for the card scheme to fail to deliver its intended benefits.

In the 2005-06 parliamentary sessions, the number of rebels voting against the Government on the identity cards initiative increased slightly. This is also in table 4.2. Importantly, however, the votes in this Parliament were still not a major rebellion when compared to backbench behaviour during the previous term in office. Once more the profile of those MPs who rebelled was largely "usual suspects", although this was slightly less pronounced then during the previous Bill. Again, significant rebels are highlighted by an asterisk, with abstentions being indicated with an "A".

Because of the reduced parliamentary majority, and the loss of the Conservative's Front Bench support for the policy, these votes did represent a significant risk for the Labour Government. The Government majority on this vote was cut by half. However, as pointed

out by Cowley and Stuart (2006), the dissenting MPs distributed their votes between the different aspects of the Bill, so that the 33 backbenchers who opposed the legislation where sure not to bring about a government defeat.

The notion of compromise is central to the issue of putting assets at hazard. Of particular interest here is the lack of willingness to compromise over certain aspects of legislation. Because of the General Election, and the dissolution of Parliament in early 2005, the *Identity Cards Bill 2004* was not subject to the full scrutiny of the parliamentary process. Because the *Identity Cards Bill 2005* went through the full parliamentary process, there is more data available on which to base an assessment of this dimension of the definition.

Offering a concession over certain aspect of a piece of legislation enables a government to preserve other more important dimensions of a Bill, without the need to risk significant resources. In the face of potentially rising costs, it is expected that government would seek to pare off non-core aspect of the policy in an effort to preserve more highly prized elements of the proposed legislation. Evidence of a willingness to negotiate non-core aspects of the policy so as to be sure of the passage of the main portion can be read as a measure of the degree of commitment to the policy in question.

On twelve different occasions over the passage of the *Identity Cards Bill 2005*, the Government failed to achieve a majority on division in the House of Lords, and was defeated. Rather than contesting all of these amendments, the Government granted concessions on four, thus giving in to the Lords' demands. All of these concessions occurred on 13th February 2006, when the Government considered the Lords amendment for the first time. After this point, the Government was not willing to offer concessions on

any other aspect of the legislation. Table 4.4 below shows a timeline of the amendments made by the Lords, the Government's response, and the number of Labour rebels when the amendment was voted for.

Table 4.3 Lords amendments to the Identity Cards Bill 2005

	Stage/ date	Subject	Overturned	Stage/ Date	Size of rebellion
Main passage of Identity Cards Bill 2005/06	Committee 16.11.2005	Only those "who reasonably require proof" entitled to verify identity	Agreed	Commons Consideration 13.02.2006	-
	Report 16.01.2006	Block scheme until cost/benefit report conducted	Overturned - tabled alternative (Dobson)	Commons Consideration 13.02.2006	2
	Report 16.01.2006	Security of registrable facts	Agreed	Commons Consideration 13.02.2006	-
	Report 16.01.2006	"public interest" to include prevention of illegal & fraudulent acts.	Agreed	Commons Consideration 13.02.2006	-
	Report 23.01.2006	Break link with designated documents	Overturned	Commons Consideration 13.02.2006	21
	Report 23.01.2006	Primary legislation before compulsion	Agreed – reflects position of HAC	Commons Consideration 13.02.2006	-
	Report 30.01.2006	Appointment procedure for Information Commissioner	Overturned	Commons Consideration 13.02.2006	1
	Report 30.01.2006	Information Commissioner to report to Parliament	Overturned	Commons Consideration 13.02.2006	0
'Ping Pong'	Lords Consideration 06.03.2006	Break link with designated documents	Overturned	Commons Consideration 13.03.2006	18
	Lords Consideration 15.03.2006	Break link with designated documents (2rd time)	Overturned	Commons Consideration 16.03.2006	13
	Lords Consideration 20.03.2006	Delay linkage with designated documents until after 2011	Overturned	Commons Consideration 21.03.2006	9
	Lords Consideration 28.03.2006	'Opt in' link with designated document	Overturned	Commons Consideration 29.03.2006	9

The concessions offered included a drafting amendment which sought to tighten the scope of who was entitled to ask to verify an individual's identity. As a government source

recalled, the view of the parliamentary draftsman was this was an unnecessary alteration

to the legislation which made no legal difference to its status. As such, there was a good

deal of reticence on the part of the Government to accept this change. However, as the

Government source recalls, this "…wasn't a sort of die in the ditch point." (Government

source, interview, 2010), so the Government gave way.

> So that was accepted, that was put in the legislation, and arguably it makes no
> difference to the law – the lawyers tell us it makes no difference. On the other
> hand, it may have reassured some of the MPs or Peers. (Government source,
> interview, 2010)

Similarly, further concessions were granted. One such concession was in the form of an

amendment tabled by Frank Dobson MP, in response to an overturned amendment from

the Lords. In the context of concerns about the cost of the scheme, the Dobson

amendment stipulated that a six monthly Home Office report be laid before Parliament,

outlining the cost of the identity cards programme. The Government was reluctant to

capitulate but this concession was offered to placate concerns and unease about the cost

estimates of the Home Office, which had been subject to scrutiny over the course of the

policy development process. As a senior official recalls,

> I know my financial colleagues at the time thought it was a terrible burden. On the
> other hand, having done it, having got it out there, it's been quite helpful because
> it does mean that the cost argument sort of disappeared. (Government source,
> interview, 2010)

Rather than conceding to the Lords amendment on this issue, which sought to block the

legislation until a cost benefit report had been concluded, the Government supported the

amendment tabled by Frank Dobson. Instead of expending resources directly, the

Government used its capacity to grant concessions in certain areas of the Bill, thereby

reducing the requirement to mobilise assets to achieve other objectives. With a reduction

in the need to mobilise its assets, the risk associated with pursuing a particular line of behaviour was lessened. This concession over the transparency of the running costs of the scheme helped to avoid a battle with Labour backbenchers. The risks of such a battle included the Government being required to use its authority over its backbenchers to cajole them into voting with the Government when requested to do so. As we have seen, significant rebellions undermine authority, and so strategies for minimising these sorts of costs when a consensus can be found incur fewer opportunity costs than simply and direct coercion.

However, the Dobson example is a little different in that political costs are saved at the expense of incurring greater organisational or administrative costs. For officials in the Home Office, the concession was viewed as a "terrible burden". However, the Government was still able to retain the principle of non-disclosure of "commercially sensitive" data, which was the principle issue behind its rejection of the amendment in the first place. This concession was therefore not overly onerous and allowed Dobson to vote with the Government. As one official recalls,

> If somebody had said at the outset, you should put in a clause saying that every six months you need to publish estimates, I'm quite certain we wouldn't have done that. But that was a necessary change in order to ensure the legislation was got through, so that was the right thing to do at the time. And if you like, that's a sort of risk mitigation, in order to stop any issue getting out of control. (Senior civil servant, interview, 2010)

One reason for the Home Office's perception that concessions might have been necessary in this area can be found in the position adopted by the Labour backbenchers towards costs during 2005-06 debate. A number of MPs without a record of rebelling against the Government, and who did not vote against the 2004-05 Bill, or the Bill under debate in

2005-06, still felt compelled to ask a series of questions relating specifically to the

expected overall costs of the scheme, and to the price to the individual. For example,

> May I press the Home Secretary a little further on the issue of capping the charge?
> …. Will my right hon. Friend give us an assurance that the public will not be
> expected to pay more than £28 or £30 at today's prices when the ID cards are
> introduced? (Salter, HC deb. 28 Jun 2005, col. 1164)

> One can envisage a situation in which, even when identity cards are not
> compulsory, poor people become more and more disadvantaged… What steps will
> my right hon. Friend take to ensure that our poorer citizens are protected from that
> possibility and are able to access ID cards, if they wish to do so, in a way that is
> affordable and not too complex? (Salter, HC deb. June 2005, col. 1165)

A number of otherwise supportive MPs also pointed to the issue of public perception and

support for the scheme, and the requirement for transparency. This included the then chair

of the influential Home Affairs Select Committee, John Denham.

> Public confidence in the scheme and its costings is critical. I can tell the Minister
> that we will find it hard to generate that confidence without switching quickly to a
> much more open procurement process on the basis of section-by-section
> discussion of every part of the system. (Denham, HC deb. col. 1206)

> If costs at the end of the process are too high, the value of having an identity card
> system would have to be demonstrated or it would rapidly become unpopular and
> lose the public support required for its introduction. (Denham, June 2005, HC
> deb. 1196)

Similarly, it was the issue of cost which Frank Dobson MP, claims was responsible for his

potentially not supporting the Government, and the basis of his amendment to which the

Government conceded.

> I could not support the Bill tonight unless it contained a provision for the
> Government to come back to the House—which is responsible for the raising and
> spending of tax—every six months to give us an up-to-date estimate of the costs.
> …. Were that to happen, we would have the opportunity to stop throwing good
> money after bad. Therefore, I cannot support the Bill tonight (Dobson, HC deb.
> June, 2005, col. 1212)

The most significant issue on which the Government gave way was the removal of the so called "super –affirmative procedure" from the legislation. This particular statutory instrument was analogous to amendable secondary legislation, and was designed to allow the move from the first voluntary phase of the scheme through to full compulsion. As a government source recalls, "the most significant of those changes was to take out the provisions in the legislation that would allow for the second phase of David Blunkett's proposal". In its place, and in response to the Lords amendment, the Government agreed that further Primary Legislation would be required before full compulsion could be part of the scheme. The compulsory requirement was removed so as to "…avoid getting into a stalemate" (Ibid).

In the view of the Home Office, this particular concession weighed the greatest. Government sources described the concession as being "major" and "turned the terms of trade". The legislation was no longer viewed as a means to a compulsory identity cards scheme. This was viewed as problematic because

> …most of the public opinion research we'd done was about the worst type of scheme being a voluntary scheme. It's got to cover anybody otherwise it doesn't really work. So it made it a slight weaker argument to say, we want this legislation through, but it won't actually deliver the end point, but they [ministers] were happy to take that one.
> (Government source, interview, 2010)

Although the decision to concede on this issue was felt keenly by Home Office officials, ministers were more concerned about the potential impact of the super-affirmative procedure on the progress of the legislation at some future point. It had become clear that the new super-affirmative procedure offered the Lords a means of exercising a veto on

compulsion because the House of Lords could always have disagreed at a future point. A government source explains this view.

> …whereas of course, if you require complete compulsion through primary legislation, you can ultimately use the Parliament Act and override it. So at the end of the day, ministers were quite happy to give that up. (Government source, interview, 2010)

> …because it was going to be many years away before you'd have been able to trigger that power anyway, and probably they suspected they'd never have got it through under secondary legislation. In handling terms that was the big concession, but in practice, it didn't mean so much. (Government source, interview, 2010)

The concession was deemed to be strategically necessary for securing a main provision of the scheme in the future. Because compulsion had to await primary legislation, it seems that the Government were prepared to let the next government worry about these costs. On this issue, the time horizons of ministers were rather short. Moreover, it was not clear that the use of the super-affirmative procedure was actually worth the argument. To do so would have cost additional parliamentary time, and would have been an additional vote the Government would have had to ask its sceptical back bench MPs to agree on. All of this would have been for a statutory instrument whose capacity to yield a favourable outcome was doubted.

The concession of requiring further primary legislation before compulsion also has implications for the resource of parliamentary time. Primary legislation requires far more time than secondary legislation to draft and implement, and so a preference for the latter is understandable. Moreover, the degree of parliamentary oversight is reduced, and so the Government can be more assured of achieving a favourable outcome. However, in the context of minister's views about the potential difficulty to be faced in the Lords over this issue in the future, the balance of resources favours making a concession on requiring

further primary legislation, and holding firm elsewhere. Other political costs associated with making these concessions, including the Government's authority and legitimacy must be examined as a whole, and in conjunction with those issues on which the Government was not willing to concede.

Table 4.4 also demonstrates the points on which the Government was not willing to concede. Of the twelve amendments made by the Lords, four were agreed, and a compromise was offered on one where the costing amendment was tabled by Frank Dobson. This left seven amendments on which the Government was not prepared, or felt unable, to offer further concessions. Of these, two dealt with the new post of the Identity Commissioner, relating to the individual's appointment procedure, and to access to the annual report the new Commissioner was required to make. Neither of these issues raised significant rebellions on the Labour backbenches.

 The remaining five amendments all related to the compulsory link between applications for designated documents and automatic enrolment onto the NIR. The Lord's position, and the position of the Opposition, was that this link was tantamount to compulsion. Because the Government has proposed to introduce identity cards initially on a voluntary basis, the Opposition felt able to hold the Government to account on this issue. Much of the ensuing debate revolved around the wording of the Labour Party Manifesto, with both sides claiming their position was justified by citing the following:

> We will introduce ID cards, including biometric data like fingerprints, backed up by a national register and rolling out initially on a voluntary basis as people renew their passports (Labour Party, 2005, pp. 52-53)

This is significant to the discussion because if the Government's election manifesto contains a specific policy pledge, then according the Salisbury Convention, the Opposition will not oppose it in the Lords. It was the perceived lack of voluntarism in the Bill that the Opposition objected to, and on which their opposition was based and justified.

Having rejected a proposed break in the link between registration and enrolment when considering the Lord's amendment on 13th Feb 2005, the Commons was required to consider this aspect of the legislation on a further four occasions before the Lords capitulated. Once more, these amendments address the central issue of compulsion at the heart of the Bill. After having already offered concessions in this area by requiring primary legislation to be passed before full compulsion could be introduced, the Government felt confident in adopting a more resolute stance on this issue. Government would not, according to one source close to the process, were not willing to "give more" on this issue (Government source, interview, 2010). As the Home Secretary argued,

> The fact is that the Government have made a large number of compromises, not least, for example, in relation to having full-scale primary legislation before going compulsory. A whole string of them relate to cost. We have been compromising all the way. (Clarke, 21 Mar 2006, col. 197)

It was the intention to retain the link between designation and enrolment in the legislation to which the Government demonstrated a high degree of attachment. As well as this issue attracting the largest rebellion from its backbenchers, aside from votes on the principle, this was also the source of the disagreement with the House of Lords, which was to drag on for some time.

4. Perseverance over time and 5. Against escalating costs

As table 4.4 shows, the latter stages of the Identity Card Bill's passage through Parliament were dominated by defeats inflicted on the Government by the House of Lords, and the Government's efforts to overturn them. Table 4.4 also shows the number of times the Bill was passed back and forth in the latter stages of the Bill's passage through Parliament. As has been noted, the Government was defeated a total of twelve times in divisions in the Lords during the passage of the Identity Cards Bill. Eight of these defeats occurred during the main passage of the Bill, principally during the Report Stage, with a further four defeats being inflicted during the parliamentary "ping pong" which followed. Importantly for this analysis, of the twelve defeats, the Government sought to overturn eight when they returned to the floor of the Commons, and were successful on each occasion. Significantly, the number of rebels declined as the process extended over time. The final four of these battles between the Government in the Commons and the Liberal and Conservative alliance in the Lords revolved around the issue of compulsion and the linkage between designated documents and identity cards. Once a defeat was inflicted, the Government found itself in the position of having to wait until the Bill's return to the Commons before it could overturn the amendment, if it still wishes to see that particular aspect of the Bill becoming law. Given this situation, a choice must have been made about continuing to battle for its inclusion, knowing that resources have already been mobilised, and that the use of further resources would be required in the Commons.

A further assessment relates to the times the Bill was sent back from the Lords for further consideration in the Commons during the final stages of its progression through Parliament. In such a position, it is conceivable that the Government may have been

hesitant to tackle head-on the defeats inflicted in the Lords because of the potential for any unwanted attention that a protracted (and potentially well reported) confrontation between the two chambers might draw to the more controversial aspect of the policy (Russell and Sciara, 2007). Such attention might heighten the risks associated with forcing the Bill through, both in terms of the Government's base of popular support, as well as support from within its own party as individual MP's come under pressure from their constituents. The number of times a bill "ping-pongs" between chambers must therefore increase the pressure felt to give way to the demands of the Lords, requiring a higher degree of perseverance of the part of the Government, the longer this takes. This issue is compounded by the fact that the passing back and forth of a bill uses up limited legislative time, and as has been discussed, limitation on time is the principal constraint on the quantity of legislation brought forward by the Government each parliamentary session (Norton, 2005). Time taken up by an item of legislation can potentially eat away at the overall legislative programme for the parliamentary session, which can have broad strategic policy implications. Given this, the Government must wish to avoid a potentially risky, drawn-out bout of ping-pong. The number of times the Lords were willing to insist on its amendments, which the Commons were not willing to accept, might therefore serve as a suitable proxy measure of the degree of resolve the Government has to see its bill retain particular facets, in the face of experienced and persistent adversity. Such perseverance also demonstrates a preparedness to sustain its position over time, despite resistance.

A willingness to mobilise its scarce resources in a bid to overturn Lords amendments, as well as to endure a protracted bout of parliamentary ping-pong, provides some evidence of the Government's commitment to the identity cards scheme on this limb, despite the

very real potential for significant loss. A source close to the proceedings highlighted the Government's lack of decisive control in situations such as this, when compared to other part of the legislative process.

> It's actually a bit like keeping your nerve, which side was going to give way first… you can't actually force the House of Lords to accept, they can always change their mind (Government source, interview, 2010)

As has been noted, the Bill bounced back and forth five times before the Lords capitulated to the will of the Commons on 29th March 2006. All four of the defeats during these final stages of the Bill represent a focused attempt by the Lords to break the mandatory link between applications for "designated documents", and entry onto the NIR. Labour ministers argued that this link was a vital part of the Bill, as to break the automatic linkage would be introducing an unacceptably large degree of uncertainty into the plans for rolling out identity cards (Clarke, 29 March, 2006, Hansard, col. 876).

Agreement was finally reached when peers consented to an amendment which allowed individuals to opt-out of holding an identity card when applying for a passport until 2010, though they would still have been entered in the NIR. The linkage between applications for designated documents and the mandatory enrolment of individuals on the NIR was still, therefore, fully preserved. One concession offered to the Lords by this amendment was that there would be no requirements for an individual to inform the authorities about changes to personal details if they were not issued with a card. Thus, without this information, and without the card itself, no audit trail of card use would be generated. In this way, some of the civil liberties concerns of the Lords were addressed.

The determination on the part of the Government, to disregard the preferences of the House of Lords is demonstrated by table 4.4. By overturning amendments, and persisting in their position on other aspects of the legislation, the Government can be seen to demonstrate its willingness to mobilise its resources in pursuit of political aims over time. This willingness constitutes a central component of the notion of political commitment. In comparison to other amendments moved by the Lords, the pressure behind the wish to see this aspect of the Bill changed was both particularly persistent and focused, constituting the most significant test of the Government's commitment over time.

In addition to the pressure being exerted by the Lords, the issue of parliamentary timetabling exacerbated this position. With the Easter recess looming, one government source recalled during interview,

> …if the Opposition had dug their heels in, we would eventually have run out of time, because ping pong can't go on indefinitely. (Government source, interview, 2010)

The Parliament Act (1949) was an option, but for a number of reasons was never really considered seriously. In addition to being in "constitutional crisis territory" (Ibid), the issue which most played on the minds of those involved was that it would hold up proceedings.

> …it is a big heavy tool which delays, because it means you have to bring your fresh legislation in the following Parliamentary session, so it would have meant in October 2007, we would have been bringing back in fresh legislation. (Government source, interview, 2010)

In hindsight, a government source close to this process reinforced this point, and highlighted additional challenges that were to come.

> Had the legislation still been in play, and we hadn't got it through before the Easter recess, and then Charles went, I think there would have been in serious danger of whether a new Home Secretary would have had the authority at the time, an interest in getting that up and running. (Government source, interview, 2010)

Again, time and the many constraints on action which flow from the scarcity of time in the parliamentary arena can be seen to weigh heavily on the decision making processes of those individuals in government charged with ensuring the passage of legislation. The constitutional issues were presented almost as an afterthought. They were not worth serious consideration because of the effect of the time required for drawing up a new bill. A packed schedule of legislation for the following year would mean a delay of more than eighteen months. The constraining power of the requirement to follow parliamentary procedures saps this valuable resource from the Government. The opportunity costs of the use of the Parliament Act (1949), rather than any constitutional issue it might imply, were the principal barrier in the mind of Home Office ministers and officials.

Despite the challenges, over the course of the ping-pong, the Government's position solidified. It was felt that a victory in the Lords was very close. Indeed, it was a concession offered by the former Home Office Permanent Secretary Lord Armstrong of Illminster, a Cross bench Peer, who offered an opt out clause so that people who were applying for a passport could opt-out from having an identity card if they wished. Importantly, the opt-out included a four year sunset clause, after which time, provision of identity cards with passport applications would become mandatory. Individuals would, however, still be included on the NIR. This was, for one government source, very much a "pragmatic solution"

> …it allowed everyone to save face, in that no one was seen to be completely
> backing down…. and it enabled the Conservatives to vote in favour of that final
> amendment. (Government source, interview, 2010)

Other government sources were much more dismissive, viewing the concession as "largely cosmetic stuff around dates of implementation" (Government source, interview, 2010). Moreover, the issue of a sunset clause was been put to ministers some months before, and so there was a feeling within the Home Office especially, that by this time, the battle had already been long won.

For other reasons too, the Government was less concerned than might be expected given the length of time the ping-pong went on for. As a government source recalled, there was a feeling that as the ping-pong process wore on the strength of the Government grew in relation to the opposition. For example, there was a perception that resistance in the Commons began to diminish.

> …once you start ping ponging between the Lords and the Commons … even
> where there's doubters on the Labour benches in the Commons, they start to see it
> as a Commons vs. Lords issue, and the principally elected house has the final say,
> and they're less interested in what the actual issue is. (Government source,
> interview, 2010)

Here, the constitutional issue of the Commons' primacy over the Lords as the elected chamber is pointed to rather than the mobilisation of the Government's authority. Indeed, the data in table 4.4 supports this view, showing as it does a diminution in the number of Labour rebels over the course of the ping-pong process. However, it was not just in the Commons that this affect was felt. In the Lords too, the conventions of the House were pointed out, in the hope that crossbenchers would reconsider their opposed position.

> …actually, I think we were very close to getting it through because the cross-benchers were very nervous about this being a manifesto commitment or not. There was a debate about that. They were starting to get nervous, hence the pressures from the Cabinet Secretaries, and they all popped up. Lord Armstrong, … Andrew Turnbull, Robin Butler, they were all offering their services but the doyen, as the elder statesman of ex Cabinet Secretaries had beaten them too it as it were, so they were picking up nervousness I think, because the Government actually had quite a strong case that it was a manifesto commitment. (Government source, interview, 2010)

The resolve of many of the cross bench peers seems to have been tested during this period, and unlike the Government's, it was found wanting. However, it is the institutionalised authority of parliamentary conventions, rather than their reading of the authority of the Government of the day that was responsible for the nervousness of the cross bench peers.

6. Self-binding

A further aspect of being committed related to the issue of "self-binding". Rather than a condition of commitment, self-binding is a strategy adopted by governments through which commitment is pursued. The point is not necessarily the object of commitment itself, but rather the influence upon the behaviour of others of appearing to be committed. It is not a necessary condition of commitment, but when a government feels it necessary to adopt this position, its presence is sufficient to indicate a committed stance. This section of the chapter presents the analysis of data coded for evidence of government actors binding themselves, being bound by the actions of others, or else attempting to convince others of being bound.

There appeared to be a lack of strong evidence for this strand of the definition in this arena. The analysis showed no strong evidence of binding financial expenditure decisions which could not be recouped if the scheme was no longer pursued. Other forms of collateral based expenditure might have included the opportunity costs associated with drafting the legislation, and on securing its passage through Parliament, when their value might be redeemed when the legislation is successfully passed, but these might reasonably be assumed for any item of legislation. Moreover, even when a resource such as time was expended as a result of an unforced issue, such as ping-pong with the Lords, it would be stretching the definition to suggest that this was a purposeful effort to "alter the structure of incentives" (Elster, 2000).

However, one area where this strand of the definition might be relevant is in the area of credibility. The benefits which flow from a particular relationship could be treated as if it was collateral to be recouped when the object of commitment is achieved. An example of this might be the presentation of the international passport harmonisation requirements as an event which forces the hand of government. The consequences of not participating are interpreted as being so severe that the Government simply must bind itself to the identity cards policy option. In effect, the interests of the United Kingdom are contrived to be so closely entwined with United States policy, that the USA's act of pre-commitment has the same effect as if the UK government has committed itself.

> The United States has already made clear that countries which do not provide their citizens with biometric passports will be excluded from its visa waiver scheme. Thus if the United Kingdom were not to introduce its own biometric passports, British citizens visiting the United States would first have to obtain a visa. (Clarke, HC deb. June 2005 col. 48)

Similarly, a focus on macro socio-political issues, which are again outside of the Government's direct sphere of influence, forces it into a position where it must act in line with the object of commitment. For example the notion of globalisation or "a changing world" is presented as a driver of government policy, where identity cards are a sensible response to those modern Twenty First century pressures.

> This is all about addressing the future and having the courage to modernise and to take on the challenges of the 21st century. (Blunkett, HC deb. Nov 2003, col. 174)

> People must understand the nature of the society in which we now live. Today, large quantities of information exist for all of us, throughout our society. The question is how we best regulate that and deal with identity fraud. (Clarke, HC deb. June 2005, col. 1160)

> We need to protect our society in this globalised world… (Clarke, HC deb. June 2005, col. 1153)

However, it is the interpretation of the significance of the event, rather than a decisive and self-imposed shift in structure of incentives which is at work here. These data therefore provides only very weak evidence for this strand of the definition in the parliamentary arena.

7. Reputation

As was discussed in the previous chapter, it the *display* of a committed stance that is important for building reputation for commitment. This section of the chapter explores Government's efforts to build reputation for commitment along three different dimensions as evidence for effort to build a reputation for commitment. These dimensions

are capacity, intention, and resolve. Importantly, however, these dimensions exist in relationships with others (Tang, 2005).

The Government's effort to demonstrate its intention was addressed in the initial section of this chapter. Only a brief summary is therefore required here. All of these points with respect to the practical arrangement and information infrastructure of the scheme were demonstrated clearly and consistently over the course of the legislation's passage through Parliament. Moreover, the demonstration of all of these issues scored "strong" or "moderate" but very close to "strong" on each of the threshold indicators outlined in the methodology section.

By contrast with the analysis of "means", the emphasis on different aspirations for the policy shifted quite considerably over the course of the legislation's passage through Parliament and beyond. Using the coding scheme articulated in Chapter Three, figure 4.2 represents the shifting trajectory of the Government's representations of intention for its aspirations for the scheme, or "ends".

Making a judgement about the extent to which the Government sought to demonstrate its intentions is undermined by the potential disparity between what is articulated in government documents and parliamentary debates, and unexpressed intentions held within Government.

However, it can be argued with some confidence that the Government did not demonstrate a consistent degree of intent, as conceptualised here, to these aspiration or rationale aspects of the legislation. These included citizenship, the prevention of normal

crimes, and for large parts of the process, the administrative benefits of the card scheme. In contrast, and with only slightly less confidence, we can see how the Government sought to demonstrate much of the remaining aspiration only moderately, in comparison with the rest. This analysis shows that the Government clearly demonstrated strong intention towards a set of "means", but was less sure about the "ends" to which the scheme would be put.

Demonstrations of "ends" were as follows:

- The card scheme would have a role in the prevention of serious and organised, as well as 'normal' crimes;

- The prevention of identity related frauds;

- National security; the

- Prevention of illegal immigration and working;

- Improvements to the administration of the public sector; and

- Increased convenience for the public in their interaction with the state; as well as

- The promotion of a shared sense of citizenship

We have also seen that the Government was willing to exercise its capacity to allocate time in the Commons for debates, and for the divisions of time in Standing Committee. Moreover, ministers were prepared to not only demonstrate this capacity, by drawing Opposition member's attention to it, and using it as a warning to control other behaviour, but were prepared to mobilise the capacity, by curtailing debates.

Similarly, on a number of occasions, the Government attempted to demonstrate the robustness of its capacity to deliver projects such as the identity cards scheme. When faced with criticism over its record with large scale IT projects, the Government was quick to point to the perceived success of the UKPS. For example, the Home Secretary, citing an independent consumer satisfaction survey, argued that,

> Number one on that list was the UK Passport Service …. I cite that example because it demonstrates that major public service projects, and even Home Office public service projects can, through investment in technology for massive schemes, beat the world—both the public and private sector—in the service that they offer to people. That is a tribute to what can be done. (Clarke, 28 Jun 2005, HC deb. col. 1170)

> A good example of a large, directly-related IT system that works well is the one that works through the UK Passport Service, efficiently producing millions of documents to a very high standard of security each year. (Browne, SC deb. 20 Jan 2005, col. 161)

Government was, however, forced to concede on a number of occasions the limitations of its ability in the past to successfully implement large scale IT project. The effect of this was mitigated by arguing that this was a problem faced by all the Government, but its previous failure rate in this area made it rather difficult to make the point about capacity too robustly. By demonstrating capacity through drawing attention to past successes, the Government sought to build its *reputation for capacity*. On this dimension of representing its commitment, the Government made moderate effort to signal to others its capacity to achieve the ends it had set for itself.

The final aspect of reputation is the notion of demonstrating reputation for resolve. The previous analysis showed how the Government acted in a resolved way. Particularly

relevant are those behaviour identified under limbs (4) perseverance and (5) escalating costs. However, efforts to build reputation, so as to encourage cooperative behaviour can also be identified in slightly different and indeed more explicit forms. This reduces the burden of inference for other actors so that demonstrations of resolve are clearly understood.

One way that reputation can be demonstrated, is through drawing attention to demonstrations of resolve in the past. The Government did not however, follow this strategy precisely. Rather, the Government points to the longevity of its existing position. An example of this is when the Minister was pressed in the Commons on the issue of voluntarism, and the associated issue of the mandatory link between designated documents and identity cards. Government ministers repeatedly made the point that their position was not going to change. On a question about rethinking the principle of compulsion, the minister made the following statement.

> We have made it clear from the beginning that the ultimate aim for the programme was compulsory registration. The answer to his second question is also no. We have always said that the most important element of the programme was the database. (NcNulty, HC deb. 13 Feb 2006, col. 1146)

This shows how the position remained unchanged over time. It is also combined with the use of rather blunt and forceful language to demonstrate the robustness of that resolve. Similarly, the amount of the Government resisted demands was also frequently pointed out in parliamentary exchanges.

> "This is the second time in four weeks that these amendments have returned to the House for consideration, so I hope that I do not need to spend long making the case to reject them yet again" (Clarke, 13 Mar 2006 , col. 1249)

The amendments have been fully debated during the passage of two Bills in both this place and the other place. The House has made its position very clear on a number of occasions. We should send the amendments back to another place with the message that it is now time for their lordships to accept that the Bill should pass without further amendment. (Clarke, 13 Mar 2006 , col. 1251).

…again today, will insist on retaining the requirement in the Bill for anyone obtaining a designated document such as a passport to be entered on the national identity register. (Clarke, 29 Mar 2006, col. 878)

A further strategy was the augmentation of this resolve through linking the point on which the Government has been asked to concede to the failure of the scheme as a whole. By adopting an entrenched position the Government offered an explanation for their resolve. Particular concessions would not be possible because the implications of granting the concession would be to undermine the central function of the scheme. Again, it was in response to the effort of the Opposition to decouple the automatic linkage between designated documents and registration on the NIR that this argument was put forward. The use of language employed by the Minister suggests that appeals for a concession serve only to "…completely undermine the basis of the scheme." (HC deb. 20 Jan 2005, col. 136). The intensity of this position actually increased as the parliamentary process progressed into the late stages of the Bill's passage through both houses. By Third Reading of the 2005-06 bill, McNulty was quick to argue that "unpicking the ID card from the passport would drive a coach and horses … through the entire structure of the system that we aim to produce." (McNulty, HC deb. 18 Oct, 2005, col. 764)

Although Lords amendments Nos. 16 and 22 rest on changing a "must" to a "may", which seems a very small change, they risk undermining the basis of the current identity cards proposal. (Clarke, HC deb. 13 Feb 2006, col. 1170)

Throughout, we have also been equally clear that linking identity cards to the issue of designated documents is a central part of the scheme in the first phase" (Clarke, HC deb. 13 Feb 2006 , col. 1170)

By the final stage of the process, Charles Clarke not only sought to establish a link between the success of the Bill as a whole to this particular issue, but also the issue of the Lord's acceptance of the Commons' constitutionally superior position, both of which form part of his argument for why this amendment cannot be accepted.

> It constitutes a major and deliberate effort by the Opposition parties to sabotage the whole of a Bill that has been agreed by this House, and that was set out to the public during the general election campaign. (HC deb. 16 March, 2006, col. 1643)

By staking the success of the whole scheme on this aspect of the legislation, the Government sought to elevate its importance to the point at which their position in not accepting an amendment becomes more credible. In doing so, Government is afforded a mechanism through which other might recognise their *reputation for resolve*.

Taken together, although one dimension of the object of commitment was not consistent over the course of the legislation, Government did strongly demonstrate its intention for a set of means. Through the exercise of its parliamentary position, it was also successful in demonstrating its capacity for achieving those means. Importantly, Government was also able to demonstrate its resolve, particularly regarding the issue of compulsion.

8. Thought Style

Unlike the previous elements of the definition, this limb is not concerned with behaviour. Instead, this element of the definition appeals to evidence that is often inexplicit, non-deliberate, and perhaps unconscious. Following Staw (e.g. 1978) the final component of the definition suggests that committed actors will treat sunk costs as not being sunk.

Moreover, they will be willing to rationalise further action to justify previously costly endeavours. Rather than being a condition of commitment itself, this is an indicator of commitment. We expect to find evidence of this particular thought style driving decisions to commit. Data were therefore coded for rationalisations of decisions based on the degree of previous expenditure.

One area in which members of the Government veered close to this sort of rationale was in relation to the issue of the costs for the scheme. A primary justification for the scheme was the international trend toward travel document harmonisation, and the continued involvement of the UK in the US's visa waiver scheme (VWS).

A strategy employed by Government was to initially establish that most expenditure on the card scheme was uncontroversial and in the public interest. Much time is devoted to explaining this fact to backbench and opposition MPs. Biometric passports were cast as an "inevitable" prospect (Blunkett, Nov 2003, HC deb), including cost which "…will need to be incurred in any case to keep our passports up to acceptable international standards" (Browne, 21 March 2005, SC deb. col. 48). Debating the Bill in Standing Committee, Des Browne argued that the expenditure was "…going to have to take place anyway" (SC deb. 20 Jan 2005, col. 213). Moreover, the Minister pointed to the consensus on this issue, arguing that "[w]e all agreed, for all our security, that we should undertake that process." (Ibid).

> Members in all parts of the House must acknowledge that that can be avoided only if the United Kingdom were to choose to stand aside from the international biometric development that I have described, which would, in turn, lead to costs for those of our citizens who wish to travel in any given way.
>
> (Clarke, HC deb. June 2005 col. 1161)

> …the reality is that the biometric passports will come in 2006. As was said by my noble friends Lord Bhattacharyya and Lord Harris, that is simply inescapable.
>
> (Scotland, HL Deb., Oct 2005, col. 111)

Once this "simply inescapable" position was established, the argument that the additional cost of the card system, as distinct from the biometric passports, further expenditure was justified on the basis of redeeming value from costs that had already been sunk. The argument suggested that a small additional expenditure is required to capitalise on the initial financial outlay.

> About 70 per cent of the cost of issuing identity cards, alongside passports, is attributable to the introduction of biometric passports. (Burnham, HC deb. 13 Feb 2006, col. 1209)

> It really does make good sense for us now to build on the existing plans for biometric passports to provide our own biometric identity card scheme. This is a sensible addition. (Browne, SC deb. 21 March 2005, col. 48)

> Some 80 per cent of the population hold a passport and the increased costs associated with recording biometric information and producing a more secure document would have to be incurred anyway, if the British passport is to keep its reputation among the most secure and trusted in the world. Clarke, HC deb. 18 Oct 2005, col. 800)

This particular argument was not evident until November 2003, from which point it was mobilised with increasing regularity to answer the charge that the identity cards scheme would cost too much. A question remains about the extent to which this evidence really captures a particular thought style. As an unconscious driver of decisions, the argument above might be a little too contrived. Rather, this form of argument could well just be rhetoric. This does, however, suggest the intriguing possibility of the Government demonstrating a reputation for a "thought style", but these data on its own does not support such an assertion.

This issue aside, it is unlikely that this evidence on its own is sufficient to warrant a strong score on the dimension of "thought-style" in the parliamentary arena.

Conclusion

The analysis presented in the chapter shows a number of different things. Firstly, it offers a demonstration of how well each of the eight limbs of the definition can be operationalised when confronted with real empirical data from a case of "strong" government commitment to a policy initiative. In doing so, it demonstrated that not only was the "object" of commitment (distinguished between "means" and "ends") a more complex and changeable phenomenon that might have initially been thought, but that the strength to which that object was committed was also changeable. Secondly, the analysis examined the extent to which the definition was capable of yielding real insight into the politics of this case study. In doing so, it assessed just how proficiently the definition and the accompanying framework served to arrange and deepen our understanding of commitment in the politics of identity cards.

The final task of this chapter is to use the evidence of this chapter to make an assessment of the definition of commitment. In doing so, this section will take a longer view over the full length of the eight different limbs of the definition to make an assessment of the overall commitment of the Government in this arena.

On the first limb of the definition, the Government clearly and unambiguously demonstrated that it intended to introduce a card scheme which would be issued to the

whole legally resident population; linked by biometrics to a universal database of personal identities; linked to other designated documents – initially driving licenses and passports, but later just passports; the option of carrying the cards was ruled out, as was the option of allowing police to require their production. Finally, there was to be a degree of data sharing between the Home Office and other government departments. Although the precise terms of this were not made clear until later in the process, initial ambitions which were sustained included a provision for data sharing with law enforcement agencies.

Less clearly, the Government also intended that the scheme would aid in the prevention of serious and organised crime, and later, other more routine types of crime; it would help prevent identity frauds; impact on the activities of terrorist groups; help prevention of illegal immigration and working; to make improvements to the administration of the public sector; increased convenience for the public in their interaction with the state; and in the initial stages of the scheme under Blunkett, promote a shared sense of citizenship. We also saw how, the Government was willing to exercise it capacity, particularly in relation to the distribution of time, so that it was more likely to achieve its legislative ambitions without having to mobilise other resources in situations of greater risk.

Government was clearly willing to risk its assets, and to do so over time, both in terms of its authority over its backbenchers, and in terms of the time required to achieve its legislative ambitions.

Table 4.4. Summative scores of strength of commitment for each limb of the definition

	Necessary conditions							
Limb of definition	(1) Intention	(2) Capacity	(3) Assets	(4) Persevere	(5) Escalation	(6)Self-binding	(7) Reputation	(8)Thought - style
Presence and strength of evidence	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak but enough to be relevant	Weak	Moderate	None

The data from the parliamentary arena showed how each of these limbs performed when assessed against the criteria set out in Chapter Three. Although the Government demonstrated strong and consistent position towards (1) the means through which its ambitions for the scheme were to be achieved, its lack of consistence over the course of the legislation of its intentions for the ends for the scheme, imply that this dimension of the definition does not climb above the moderate range threshold. Conversely, because the Government was willing to make extensive use of its (2) capacity to exercise control over the distribution of time in the parliamentary arena, its strategic use of concessions, and that these were achieved in a consistent and decisive way, the data suggests that this dimension of the definition meets the threshold for being coded as strongly committed on this dimension. In contrast, although the Government was (3) willing to risk its assets in the pursuit of its policy aims on a number of key occasions, the subjective perceptions of those involved towards the actual risks faced by the Government restrict the score on this limb to moderate. On strand (4) of the definition, the Government showed clear and decisive determination to continue over time, despite resistance. Moreover, data drawn from the record of the parliamentary debate suggest that this position would have been sustained beyond that which was ultimately required. Although a number of concessions

were offered, the extent to which they altered the core elements of the policy which were so strongly shown by the Government's demonstration of "intentions", was minimal. For this reason, this limb of the definition is scored highly. On the final strand of the necessary condition limbs of the definition (5), the Government's resolve to persevere in the face of the rising costs associated with the protracted bout out parliamentary 'ping-pong', and deepening of the investiture of credibility in succeeding with these aims suggests that this limb meets the required minimal threshold. However, there is little evidence to suggest that the Government at any point viewed its sunk costs as not sunk. Indeed, some costs associated with continuing over time actually fell away. For example, the number of rebels declined, as did the number of cross-bench peers comfortable with holding out against the will of the elected chamber for a protracted period of time. Again, this could be an issue of data quality, rather than an empirical fact, but within the terms of the thesis, the score on this dimension of commitment is only a weak one.

Nevertheless, because the Government scored on all five of the necessary conditions, their joint sufficiency means that the Government was committed to the identity cards programme. However, the scores suggest that it might not be the case that the Government was as strongly committed as might have initially been thought.

Finally, the Government did not show signs of self-binding in this arena, nor of justifying its action on the basis of a particular thought style. It did, however, exhibit some evidence of seeking to build a reputation for commitment, through moderate demonstrations of its intentions, and capacity, and well as its resolve to continue under pressure. For these reasons, this limb of the definite is coded as moderate.

Having now explored this definition in the empirical context of the parliamentary arena, the task of the following chapter is to repeat this exercise in the executive arena.

Chapter 5 - Commitment in the Executive Arena

This section of the thesis continues the exercise which was begun in the previous chapter, but shifts the empirical focus from the parliamentary to the executive arena. The task, however, remains the same. The aim of this chapter is to apply the concept of political commitment set out in Chapter Two, and to assess its performance when examined in the core executive, spending department and other relevant agencies. Once again, each of the eight limbs of the definition is examined in turn. Where appropriate, the argument refers back to the previous chapter, to show the relationships between the parliamentary and executive arena, and how these contrasts with, extends and qualify the new insights from this chapter.

After a presenting a brief chronology, the timing, nature, and the extent of the Government's "commitment" on each of the different limbs is assessed. Chapter Two argued that each of the first five necessary conditions of commitment would be expected to achieve a strong score when assessed against the criteria set out in the methodology section. Although this was not found to be the case in the parliamentary context, the evidence does not, on its own, undermine the claim of the strong character of the Government's commitment to the identity cards policy. It is the cumulative score that is

most relevant in this regard. We can also expect that because of the institutions around which the area of the executive is built, and the rules which flow from these institutions, it is expected that commitment will be manifested in different ways in the executive arena when compared with the parliamentary arena. Strand eight proved to be of little worth in the parliamentary arena, but could turn out to be more important in the executive arena. This is because the types of data available in this arena are more likely to provide a context for the expression of this limb of the definition. Finally, a summative assessment of the combined scores on each limb will be offered to allow comparison between arenas, and also for the overall assessment of the strength of commitment to the policy across them both.

The chronological table (table 5.1) offered below is presented as a signpost for the following discussion. It provides dates and a brief description of the relevant documentation produced by the Home Office over the course of this policy process. Much of the data for this chapter is drawn from these sources.

Table 5.1. Chronology and description of events in the executive arena

Date	Document	Description
February 2002	*Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain* (Home Office, 2002a)	First concrete policy statement including a proposal for consultation on 'entitlement cards' scheme.
June 2002	*Identity Fraud: a study* (Cabinet Office, 2002b)	Cost of identity fraud estimated at £1.3 billion per year.
February 2003	*Public perceptions of identity/entitlement cards. Qualitative Research Report* (COI/Home Office, 2003)	Public perception research commissioned by Home Office during consultation period.

November 2003	*Identity Cards: Next Steps* (Home Office, 2003)	Plans set out for a two stage process for introducing identity cards, including enrolment on a 'universal' or mandatory basis.
April 2004	*Legislation on identity cards: A consultation* (2004a)	Consultation on Draft Bill on identity cards.
October 2004	*The Government's Reply to the Fourth Report from the Home Affairs Select Committee.* HC 130 (Home Office, 2004b)	Included a recognition for clearer statutory purposes to be included on the face of the Bill.
November 2004	*Regulatory Impact Assessment* (Home Office, 2004c)	Assessment of regulatory impact on private and public sector.
May 2005	*Regulatory Impact Assessment* (Home Office, 2005a)	Similar document to that published the previous year.
June 2005	*Identity Cards Benefits Overview* (Home Office, 2005b)	Presentation of a range of arguments for introduction.
July 2005	*Home Office response to the LSE* (Home Office, 2005c)	Govt response to critical report published by the LSE. Presents a point by point rejection of LSE's alternative blueprint for a more privacy friendly identity cards scheme.
December 2006	*Strategic Action Plan* (Home Office, 2006)	Signalled change in direction for identity cards program. Moved away from single, new and centralised database, to a scheme which sought to make use of existing infrastructure.

1. Intention

As in the previous chapter, the following discussion charts the continuities and shifts in the way the Home Office and the Government, represented intentions towards the identity cards policy. Initially, this section deals with the development of an intention to have any

sort of identity cards scheme at all, and how this was manifested in the executive arena. Following this, the discussion will move onto the issue of the object of intention. Just as in the parliamentary arena, it has been possible to delineate two separate elements for this strand of the definition. These are the particular form of the apparatus or policy instruments that the Government intended to put in place, which we have called the "means", and the motives, aspirations or rationales for introduction, which we have termed the "ends". The timing, the clarity, and the strength of both the "means" and "ends" of the Government's intention are assessed, before conclusions are drawn about this strand of the definition in the executive arena.

Government's initial intention to legislate on identity cards

As was the case in the parliamentary arena, there is little evidence to suggest that the issue of an identity card was high on the Government's agenda following the Labour party's victory in the 1997 General Election. However, one of the interesting conclusions drawn from the previous chapter was that there was a disjunction in policy on two occasions. Until early 2001, although far from enthusiastic, the Government was clearly reluctant to fully rule out the possibility of a scheme in the future. After this time, and until September of that year, the position changed to one that was clearly much more negative. Data drawn from the executive arena offer a slightly different interpretation of those same events than that found in the parliamentary arena.

According to Home Office sources, identity cards were "… simply not a priority for the incoming Labour administration…", and so the policy was shelved (Government source,

interview, 2010). This position was not adopted on the basis of a strong political or ideological objection to such schemes, but rather from the fact of a lack of interest. Identity cards were seen, in the late 1990s as a Conservative Party notion that Labour did not want to resurrect. So from 1997 onwards, the previous policy was simply dropped. The photo driving licence introduced then by the DVLA went ahead and was implemented, but the former Conservative Home Secretary Rt. Hon Michael Howard MP's proposals (Home Office, 1996) for separate card for non-drivers, and the introduction of cards that could be used as a travel document did not happen. The status quo was maintained.

Renewed interest in this policy followed the September 11th attacks on the USA, and by the end of that month in 2001, Home Office officials were beginning the preliminary work on identity cards policy. As Blunkett recalls in his diary from September that year:

> The ID-card idea has taken off in a big way. I am not dampening it down but not confirming it either until we have got something clearer. (Blunkett, 2005, p. 296)

Throughout the remaining months of 2001, and on into early 2002, agreement was sought within Whitehall for the principle of holding a consultation exercise on the introduction of an identity cards scheme. This process involved a series of bilateral meetings organised through the Cabinet Office between the responsible Home Office official and a series of working-level contacts in the other government departments who had an interest in the scheme. During this time, the work on the policy, which until then had been undertaken by only very few individuals, was more formally located in the Communities Directorate of the Home Office (Interview, government source, 2010). Home Office officials spent this time developing plans for what was going to be consulted on in the forthcoming Green Paper on the basis that agreement would be reached.

Following agreement at working level between officials, the proposals for consultation were formally drafted as a ministerial letter, and circulated around a cabinet committee called the Domestic Affairs sub-Committee chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, Rt. Hon John Prescott MP, for policy agreement. Blunkett's diary is again useful for building up a chronology of events. An extract from November and December 2001 shows that the policy had reached the Domestic Affairs committee, but had not yet been internally agreed.

> We are making some progress, however, on identity cards. Stephen Harrison [former Private Secretary] is doing a good job in pulling together the material and John Prescott is being very helpful on that as well, so we might get somewhere. (Blunkett, 2005, p. 317)

> The other thing I ought to mention from Christmas week was the meeting on ID cards chaired by John Prescott, who was very helpful. We're having a further meeting because we have not yet reached agreement. (Blunkett, 2005, p. 337)

What is clear is that by February 2002, agreement on the principle of consultation had been reached at both official and ministerial level, and a statement of the intention to proceed with the consultation for "Entitlement Cards" was included in an Immigration White Paper (Home Office, 2002b, p. 82).

This account shows that at a departmental level, the Home Office intended to publish a consultation paper from an early stage in the process. The account also suggests a number of observations which are of particular interest at this point. The first is that there is a clear view at official level that the events of September 11th 2001 were strongly related to the initial stimulus behind the renewed interest in a population-wide identity card scheme. As one senior government source commented,

> …the initial concern was the 9/11 attack when suddenly people woke up to the fact that we are now living in a slightly different world where we can't just take people entirely on trust. (Interview, government source, 2010)

The view is given credibility by a number of different factors. Firstly, the policy was not communicated to Home Office officials until after September 11th. This is not to say that the scheme could not have been around as an idea before this date, perhaps at ministerial level, but there is little evidence of this at departmental level. Indeed, this is a claim that Blunkett specifically rules out by stating quite categorically that no real work had been undertaken on the issue before his interest in September 2001. As the former Home Secretary recalls,

> I told the Home Office to start investigating. They dug out stuff from when Michael Howard first mooted the idea of a British ID card back in the 90's, but the difference, this was absolutely crucial for me, the difference was biometrics. (Blunkett, interview, 2010)

It is of equal significance that documentation available to officials during the early work on this scheme was that which had been generated by the previous Government's policy proposals (Home Office, 1995) involving photo-driving licenses. As a government source talking about the process recalls,

> …driving licences were of course the call behind Michael Howard's ideas, so they still had all the old papers about how they would have done it. (Government source, interview, 2010)

These extracts suggest that little or no work had continued within the Home Office since the mid-1990s. The issue of identity cards had lain dormant as a "moribund policy" (Government source, interview, 2010) since the Labour Government took office in 1997.

In addition, organisational issues lend credence to the suggestion that the Home Office began its work on identity cards policy from a standing start in September 2001. Once the instruction was given by the Home Secretary to begin preliminary work on the scheme, it was not immediately clear to officials precisely where the identity card policy development work was to be located within the Home Office. Entitlement cards was "rather vaguely positioned" in the Communities Directorate of the Home Office,

> …for no other reason other than the fact that prior to it being the Communities Directorate…. it had ID cards policy in it. Most of that stuff was transferred to the Department for Constitutional Affairs in the 2001 election, so effectively ID card essentially was a moribund policy. (Government source, interview, 2010).

An alternative interpretation of events is that the Home Secretary was personally a strong entrepreneurial driving force behind this policy. Interview data from both officials and from organisations external to the executive suggest that this policy was politically driven, rather than it being Whitehall led. This view and the position that identity cards policy was related to September 11th are not mutually exclusive, as one senior official offering his personal view of Mr Blunkett suggests.

> I think he always had it in mind to do something about ID cards. I'm reasonably confident about that assertion …. I think the timing of when he said something was entirely influenced by events. This was not, I'm pretty sure, number one on his priority list, or number two or number three on his priorities when he came into the Home Office, but it was on a list somewhere, of that I'm sure, and he would have turned his attention to it at some point. (Government source, interview, 2010)

The same source also gave a view on Blunkett being challenged on the issue of identity cards in repeated interviews following September 11th. The source suggested that,

> [I]n the context of being tougher on terrorism and stuff, I think as a wily politician, Mr Blunkett saw his opportunity. In a sense, he had to say something, he felt he had to follow it up in some way, and do something. But he wasn't just going through the motion, I think this is something he wanted to do for some time, so I think he seized the opportunity. (Government source, interview, 2010)

In the account of events outlined above, September 11th is still of central relevance to the development of this policy. However, it is not the driving force, or the cause of the Home Office's policy stance. Instead, it represents an opportunity whereby existing ambitions were allowed to be expressed, or were perhaps even magnified. It might, on this evidence, be classed as a necessary but not sufficient causal factor. However, providing an explanation for the policy's development is far outside the scope of the concept formation exercise which is being attempted in this thesis. Nevertheless, this additional information is useful for guiding the current analysis, because it strongly suggests that evidence for "intention" will not be found before September 2001. This remark provides evidence of, at most, an aspiration. This is some way short of the resolute condition of a clear 'intention' as identified in this thesis. Moreover, evidence of an individual minister's plans is not evidence of "intention" on the part of the Government as a whole, until such time as the Minister has made the necessary moves to put the idea through the policy making process in Cabinet. Nevertheless, it does offer additional insight into some of the conclusions drawn from the data in the previous chapter.

Rather than a refusal to rule out identity cards being an indication of sustained interest in such schemes, the data offered here suggests that a lack of interest characterised the Government's position towards a card scheme. The lack of documentation on identity cards, and the organisational uncertainty about the location of the Entitlement Cards Unit in the very early stages of the scheme suggest a clear discontinuation between the Howard proposals, and the proposals enacted under the Labour administration. On this evidence,

the renewed interest in identity cards post September 11th was certainly a new policy direction. We are, however, still unsure why from early 2001, until September of that year, the position of the Government shifted from disinterest to outright rejection. This is particularly puzzling if we accept the view articulated earlier, that Blunkett had a deep personal interest in such schemes, and would have acted on it sooner or later. Once more, this issue lies outside the scope of this thesis, but it is useful to raise it as a question for further research.

In July 2002, the Green Paper *Entitlement Cards and Identity Fraud: a consultation* (Home Office, 2002b) was published. This document set out a range of options for an identity or entitlement cards scheme, including different options towards compulsion, and the use of different kinds of more or less sophisticated technology. The consultation period was six rather than the standard three months, because of perceived size and significance of the issue. During this time the Home Office also commissioned research into the public's views of the proposed scheme. The research report suggested that aside from disliking the term "entitlement card" as being "weasely" (COI/Home Office, 2003, p. 8), the public's perceptions of the scheme were broadly positive, and were cited by the Government as being instrumental in the decision to change the name of the policy from entitlement to identity cards (Home Office, 2003).

Nine months after the end of this consultation period, in November 2003, a clear and unequivocal policy statement was made to announce a decision on introduction. The White Paper *Identity Fraud: the Next Steps* (Home Office, 2003) set out the Government's intention to bring forward legislation on what was now called a national identity card scheme. Citing the mass mobilisation of populations around the globe,

advances in technology and the nature of modern social interaction as key drivers of the

policy, the document stated that

> "[t]he Government has decided to begin the process of introducing a national identity cards scheme as a key part of a comprehensive strategy to contain these threats and ensure more reliable means of authenticating people's identity." (Home Office, 2003, p. 4)

The clear expression of a strong intent to legislate implies that an agreement had been

reached at Cabinet Committee level, and that policy clearance had been agreed between

the various departments of state, the Cabinet Office and No. 10. It is at this point that the

position of an individual department towards the policy was accepted by the Government.

The amount of time that it took for agreement to be reached, and for this document to be

published suggests that arrival at a cross-departmental consensus on this issue was not,

however, a straightforward task.

The object of intention in the executive arena – "means"

Although a number of different options were suggested in the consultation document, it

was clear that a particular form of card scheme was favoured by the Home Office. Of

fundamental importance to the proposals was the notion of a central register of personal

identities. Importantly, the scheme would make use of

> …a new register that will be created as people apply for identity cards. It will not be simply a revised or updated version of existing databases, for example of persons issued with passports or driving licences. (Home Office, 2002, p. 15).

A great deal of effort was expended on emphasising the robustness of this aspect of the design of the scheme. The "secure database" would require "rigorous procedures" to ensure its accuracy (Home Office, 2002b, p. 13). Elsewhere, the "…establishment of a new, secure register…" was identified as one of the "…essential elements of the scheme." (Home Office, 2004c, p. 4). Similar "secure procedures" would be required to keep the information accurate and up to date to ensure that the inaccuracies of existing government purpose specific databases, such as those for National Insurance or the NHS, would not be duplicated on this new system (Home Office, 2002b). The reason for this emphasis was made clear. Much of the administration and benefits of the scheme were to rest on the definitive nature of the database. This central register would hold the "core personal information" including biometric measurements, of the entire "resident population" and would be the basis from which the entitlement cards would be issued. In addition to the use of biometrics, each entry on the register could then be associated with a "unique personal number" which could potentially be cross-referenced with other numbering systems used across government (Home Office, 2002b).

As was noted in the previous chapter, the great majority of these basic aspects of the scheme which were articulated in the 2002 consultation document remained in place for much of the rest of the policy process. However, the scheme did develop in a number of different ways. Following the consultation process, the notion of an audit log detailing "when information on the Register has been accessed" was added to the design of the scheme (Home Office, 2004b). Moreover, the format of the cards was cemented as time wore on. Original plans were for identity cards to be based on passports and driving licenses, and for individuals who were not eligible for these documents, a stand-alone entitlement card would be issued in the form of "…a special variant of the driving licence

entitlement card" (Home Office, 2002, p. 46). The "family" of entitlement cards was the preferred policy option, even following the change in name from entitlement to identity cards with the publication of the Next Steps White Paper (Home Office, 2003). The plan remained to proceed,

> …towards more secure passports and driving licences based on biometric technology – with personalised, specific identifiers. (Home Office, 2003, p. 4).

> Establishing powers to issue identity cards including "plain'' cards as well as a power to designate existing documents (such as passport or driving licence cards) as identity cards. (Home Office, 2004b, p. 8)

Elsewhere, however, these plans did not seem to be so definitive. The *Regulatory Impact Assessment* (Home Office, 2004c) published only a few months later than the document that the quote listed above is taken from, suggested that further parliamentary debate was required in a number of areas, including,

> …decisions on which documents will be linked to the issuing of ID cards, e.g. present plans are based on passports and residence permits but others could be added such as driving licences. (Home Office, 2004c, p. 25)

As Blunkett reflects his diary from July 2003, and elsewhere, this issue is one which seems to stem from both political and administrative constraints.

> I think I am going to have to do the scheme on the back of updating passports. That way, the whole things stays in the hands of the Home secretary… I would like to incorporate driving licences, but it looks as though the political struggle to get agreement and to ensure the European-wide requirements can be taken into account is going to be too big an obstacle to overcome. (Blunkett, 2005, p. 522)

> Alistair Darling from a practicalities point of view, he didn't want the driving licence agency involved…. he just felt that it would complicate matters. (Blunkett, interview, May 2010)

A slightly different view was offered by one government source. The source claimed that

> …while legally it's possible to make it work, and the legislating carried on in that way, the practicality of how you'd deliver it meant we felt we had to delivery it through a passport system. (Government source, interview, 2010)

> …from an organisational perspective, it certainly makes it easier from a Home Office perspective for the issue of identity cards to be linked just to the two Home Office agencies that currently deal with British Citizens and foreign nationals. (Government source, interview, 2010)

The statement suggests a clear desire for the inclusion of driving licenses, but a reluctance to pursue this link because of institutional constraints involving the EU, and because of political disagreement at cabinet committee level. One reason for this might be the desire to ensure a quicker roll out of the scheme across the population. By linking registration on the scheme to the renewal of documentation that is widely held, the critical mass at which the scheme could become more effective could be reached much earlier. Indeed, the entitlement card document alludes to this point, stating that a,

> …large proportion of the population could be covered by an entitlement card scheme without them having to make a specific application for a card. (Home Office, 2002b, p. 46).

However, the political and administrative difficulties for doing so were considered to be too high. A slightly different point is presented by a senior civil servant who had been involved with the development of this policy, who suggests a continuation of a strand of thought from the 1995 identity cards proposals.

> "Ministers, initially still harking back to the Michael Howard plan, had an idea that maybe we ought to offer people an identity card at the same time as they apply for a driving license" (Government source, interview, 2010)

> "That was a sort of a bit of a vague idea at the outset… [S]omebody might come back with it in the future, but from an organisational perspective, it certainly makes it easier... for the issue of identity cards to be linked just to the two Home Office agencies that currently deal with British citizens and foreign nationals"
> (Government source, interview, 2010)

The view suggested by these statements is one which suggests a degree of continuation at ministerial level between the pre Labour proposals, and those which appeared after September 11th. By 2005, however, the notion of including driving licenses in the category of designated document had fallen away from the Home Office's policy announcements, to leave only passports as the vehicle for issuing identity cards.

An additional factor cited as being responsible for the decision to use designated documents was a straightforward financial constraint. As well as offering an efficient method for speedily rolling out the scheme to high volumes of people, the link between identity cards and designated documents was in part necessitated by a lack of alternatives. The Treasury had taken a firm decision not to offer additional funding for the scheme. As a government source recalls,

> …their bottom line was that if you want this, then you've got to deliver it within the resources that have been set aside for you... [w]hich to some extent drove us down the solution of passport, because people pay for passports, they become self-financing once you've done your sort of set-up costs. (Government source, interview, 2010)

Finally, the United Kingdom Passport Service (UKPS) had in mid-2001 announced its intention to reorganise its back office administrative systems, as well as plans to consider the idea of a passport card as a more convenient travel document (UKPS, 2001).

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Although no work had been completed, plans for a national system of registration put forward by the Home Office were viewed by UKPS as a way of furthering this objective, in perhaps an economical way, and so the agency was quite receptive to the Home Office identity cards proposals (Government source, interview, 2010).

A combination of these three different factors sits beneath the decision to link identity cards with designated documents. In light of this evidence, some additional insight is offered about the Government's reluctance to capitulate to the demands of the Lords that were discussed in the previous chapter.

In a similar way to its expression in the parliamentary arena, the issue of compulsion in the executive arena developed over time. Government was consistently clear that there was to be no compulsion to carry the documents, and this point was made strongly and repeatedly across a number of policy documents. Government were also clear in its efforts to draw a distinction between compulsion to carry an identity document, and schemes in which everyone must enrol. This latter variety was initially referred to as "universal", where "…everyone in the country over a certain age was required to register with the scheme and to obtain a card…" (Home Office 2002b, p. 18), before the shift to "compulsory identity cards" the following year (Home Office, 2003).

> …a card would be the only way to access particular services (other than in an emergency or in cases where a card had been lost or stolen). (Home Office, 2002b, p. 18)

Such universality was deemed to be essential. This was argued on the following basis.

> Most entitlements to services in the UK are based around lawful residence rather than citizenship. A universal entitlement card scheme would therefore also have to cover foreign residents other than those staying for short holidays or business trips where their passport or national identity card would suffice. (Home Office, 2002b, p. 50)

Although it would be compulsory to participate in the scheme, and eventually compulsory to make use of the card when interacting with the state, the Home Office was keen to distance the proposals with the negative connotations of compulsion, once again strongly echoing the statement from the Home Affairs Select Committee recommendations on a review of the possible uses for entitlement cards that was published in early 2001 (HAC, 2001). By 2003, however, following negative focus group reactions, the scheme was rebranded as a compulsory identity card scheme (Home Office, 2003).

Perhaps the most significant development from the perspective of Government's intention towards the content of the policy came some months after the Bill had been given Royal Assent in Parliament. To some extent, much of the political battle between Government and its opposition both within Parliament and elsewhere had been won. The identity cards policy had become law, and what remained was the process of actually putting the policy in place. Particularly significant in this regard was the document published in December 2006 called the *Strategic Action Plan for the National Identity Scheme* (Home Office, 2006). What was most remarkable about this document is that it signalled a complete shift in the emphasis given to the creation of the new infrastructure on which the identity cards scheme was to be built. Rather than the single, centralised database that was to be constructed from scratch, the document argued that the legislation did not call for such an approach.

In fact, for security reasons, and to make best use of the strengths of existing systems, it makes sense to store them separately. (Home Office, 2006, p. 10)

A new system architecture was proposed which called for an "integrated and pragmatic approach" to "…keep risks and costs down, by using existing Government investment…" (Home Office, 2006, p. 3). This would "…maximise the potential of such resources already available across government." (Ibid, p. 9). This approach included a plan to use three existing databases to administer the identity cards scheme, including the Home Office database already in place for recording asylum seekers biometric information, the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) Customer Information System and the Immigration and Passport Service's (IPS) biometric passport database.

When comparing the two arenas along this dimension, a number of features stand out. Firstly, in the executive arena, the proposed "newness" and the use of biometrics as important features of the database were strongly emphasised in the 2002 Green Paper. These two factors together were to ensure the security and integrity of the scheme, setting it apart from other less definitive government-held records of personal information. Although the same point was made in Parliament, it was not given such importance. Secondly, just as in the parliament arena, designated documents were strongly emphasised in the executive. Unlike the parliamentary context, however, it was not the justification for adopting this link between application for identity cards and passports that was discussed. Rather, it was the form of the designated document that was of most concern. Beginning initially with a "family" of identity cards, which included driving license variants, the proposals were refined to include only passports. It is worth noting that despite internal Home Office recognition of the difficulties of including driving licenses as a designated document, the possibility was publically still left open. Thirdly,

compulsion was again relevant in the executive arena, although it was less strongly emphasised in the parliamentary context. Finally, the emphasis on the potential for data sharing had a different focus in the executive arena. Rather than the police and other crime prevention services being seen as the main beneficiaries of cross-departmental data sharing practices, the discussion tended to take place at the level of efficiency savings. Although the intention towards "means" remained fairly stable across arenas, the "ends" that were to be achieved as a result of this specific provision differed between the two arenas.

The object of intention in the executive arena – "ends"

As the parliamentary arena showed, the Government had at various times, and to different degrees, sought to demonstrate its intention for certain aspects of the scheme to be used to achieve particular ends. This is also true of the executive arena. Moreover, the emphasis of each of the justifications and aspirations put forward by the Government were subject to changes over the course of the policy process. As we shall see, however, there were clear differences between the emphases offered in the different arenas. Using the same categories as in the previous chapter, this section of the thesis charts this shifting debate in the executive arena.

National Security

Echoing the pattern of the rationale that was put forward in the parliamentary arena, the initial stages of the policy's development in the executive arena sought to distance the introduction of a card scheme from the issue of national security. This is not to say that

the particular justification was entirely ruled out at this stage. At certain points the Entitlement Cards Green Paper (Home Office, 2002b) was explicit, and articulated a clear expectation that the entitlement card scheme might have a role to play in this policy area. For example, when presenting an account of the expected scope of data sharing from the proposed National Identity Register (NIR), the document made reference to the

> …closely prescribed circumstances for the police, the intelligence services and other organisations investigating very serious crimes such as HM Customs and Excise to have access to the biometric information when matters of national security were at stake. (Home Office, 2002b, p. 37)

Although not strongly emphasised, the rationale was clearly articulated, and despite ministers seeing fit to strongly play down the issue of national security at this stage, it was not ruled out completely.

This position changed between the summer of 2002 and the publication of the Next Steps White Paper in November 2003. As we have seen, within the executive arena the primary policy development tasks during this period were the consultation, and the efforts to achieve policy consensus in Cabinet. From November 2003 onwards, the carefully worded and modestly articulated aspirations for the scheme to be used as a national security tool were greatly expanded. Terrorism was now added to the list of "growing threats to the security and prosperity of British citizens" (Home Office, 2003, p. 1), and identity cards were offered as a viable policy solution. As well as advocating the use of the NIR for the pursuit of terrorist suspects, the Home Office also identified a role for the register to offer a number of indirect benefits in this area. Specifically, because terrorists were thought to use "…false and multiple identities to help undertake and finance their activities" (Home Office 2003, p. 7), the creation of a single official and unique identity

would undermine this activity, and make the British public "…better protected from terrorists and organised criminals" (Home Office, 2003, p. 3).

Arguments about the contribution of a secure identity system for addressing security issues were again put forward in 2004. By this stage, the "threat of global terrorism" was given a more prominent position in the Government's security narrative. As well as undermining terrorist's ability to use multiple identities, the scheme was to offer specific information to the police and security services that would be of direct relevance for capturing suspects.

> Police identification of terrorist suspects makes the terrorists' lives harder… It also means that the police have a better idea of who they are looking for: recent photograph, age, address, etc. and can therefore focus their investigations faster. (Home Office 2005, p. 15)

More specific examples of the benefits of the card scheme were offered. As was the case in the parliamentary arena, the claim that "[a]t least one-third of terrorist suspects are known to have used more than one identity either for facilitation or planning the commission of terrorist acts" (Home Office, 2005, p. 14), was put forward. Reference was also made to specific terrorist groups, with Government documents highlighting the experience of the Spanish authorities in their dealing with the threat posed by the Basque separatist group ETA. The Spanish card scheme helped to "marginalise" ETA's activities "by keeping their activities under proper surveillance." (Ibid, p. 15). By 2005, the scheme to have a substantive impact in terrorist investigations. As well as a more strategic role in undermining potential terrorists access to false identities, the scheme was also to provide an important psychological boost to the general population, as well as to potential investors in the British economy.

> "Fear of crime – particularly terrorism – may also influence organisations' decisions, e.g. on investment" (Home Office 2005, p. 15)

By the end of 2006, the issue of the prevention of terrorism had fallen away in the executive arena. This is unusual, given the high profile terrorist attacks on the London transport infrastructure on 7th July 2005. The prevention of terrorism was, however, relegated to the status of just one argument among many, and received little emphasis.

The trajectory of the terrorism justification for identity cards introduction is very similar to that laid out in the parliamentary arena. Beginning with little emphasis given to the issue by the Home Office, the importance of the prevention of terrorism as a justification gradually grew over the course of the policy's development. Although never the most prominent justification in this arena, the prevention of terrorism still occupied a significant role in the menu of justifications offered by the Government for the introduction of the scheme. Where the executive arena differed from the parliamentary arena was in the strength with which this strand of the argument way justified during the spring of 2004, and again during the summer of 2005, during Second Reading. During these times, the executive arena took a much cooler stance towards the justification than was the case in the parliamentary arena.

In both arenas, however, the arguments for the use of the card in this way rested on the collection of personal information and audit trail information, as well as the belief that the card scheme will rule out the possibility of individuals adopting more than one official identity, due to the inclusion of biometric personal identifiers on the database.

Identity Fraud

The Home Office maintained that one of the principal justifications for the introduction of the identity cards scheme was the prevention of identity fraud. This was true both in the executive and the parliamentary arenas. However, within the executive arena, this strand of the rationale for introduction was emphasised with more consistency, and with more vigour. Home Office efforts to demonstration its intention that the card scheme be used to tackle identity fraud can be identified in policy documents published in 2002 (Home Office, 2002). The immigration White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven. Integration with diversity in Modern Britain* (Home Office, 2002), contained a small aside announcing a consultation on the possibility of introducing an entitlement cards scheme. This was suggested partly on the basis of the benefits such a card system might offer, in terms of reducing "fraud against individuals, public services and the private sector." (Home Office, 2002, p. 82)

Echoing this sentiment, the Entitlement Cards Green Paper published in July 2002, made much of this potential application. In this document, a good deal of the effort was given over to the task of ensuring that identity fraud as a concept was understood by the reader, and that it posed a significant threat to the British population.

> Identity fraud where a person adopts a completely false identity, falsifies part of their identity (for example their age) or adopts the identity of another person is estimated to cost the UK at least £1.3 billion each year split equally between the public and private sectors." (Home Office, 2002, pp. 29-30)

Defined rather broadly, fraud of this nature was argued to cause a great deal of financial loss to the British economy, with the figure of £1.3 billions, being suggested with regularity (Cabinet Office, 2002). Moreover, the link between the misrepresentation of

identity and a range of other crimes was highlighted. By appealing to the same logic as with the terrorism argument, the Home Office suggested that the curtailment of criminal's ability to acquire multiple official identities through adoption of a card scheme would impact on a very wide range of issues.

> It is often linked to other crimes of conspiracy, fraud and deception, ranging from opportunistic impersonation to very sophisticated money laundering and people-trafficking operations. (Home office, 2002, p 29-30)

> A card scheme could help prevent people becoming victims of identity theft and identity fraud, for example preventing parents suffering the distress caused when a criminal assumes the identity of their deceased child. (Home Office, 2002, p. 8)

The card scheme was presented as a preventive measure for the sorts of crimes listed in the quote above, whose effects were thought to be felt at both the social and the personal level. This closely follows the sorts of argument that were being articulated in the parliamentary arena at the same time, as well as the relative emphasis that was given to this justification. However, whereas in the parliamentary arena, the focus on identity fraud began to fall away in 2003, in the executive arena, the emphasis was maintained with the Next Steps White Paper (Home Office, 2003) seeking to emphasise similar themes.

> Identity fraud costs the economy at least £1.3 billion every year. Individuals pay for this in general through higher charges for financial services. There can also be a heavy personal cost in putting right credit ratings and in extreme cases parents suffering the trauma of having a deceased child's identity stolen. (Home Office, 2003, p. 7)

> A cards scheme will help by providing a secure means to verify identity either in person or where the applicant is not present but gives consent, by organisations checking with the National Identity Register. Above all it prevents multiple identities being used for such purposes. (Home Office, 2003, p. 7)

As the above extracts show, rather than simply stating the huge costs to the economy the Government asserted were linked to identity fraud, the effects for individual were also spelled out. These effects were both financial and emotional. The appeal to a wider range of arguments to make the same point, as well as the definitive nature of the language, and its prominence in the document suggests a demonstration of greater intention to this aspect of the justification.

This emphasis on the issue of fraud prevention was sustained over the course of the policy proposal. Unlike in the parliamentary arena, the executive arena continued to be quite consistent in its articulation of the importance of this justification. As the process wore on, the types of justification became much more specific, presumably as discussions with potential public sector users of the scheme developed, and opportunities for the scheme's use were identified. For example, a quite specific use was envisaged relating to VAT applications. (Home Office, 2005, p. 20). Mostly, however, the emphasis continued to remain at the level of personal losses to the individual. As well as making several references to the £1.3 billions figure produced by the 2002 Cabinet Office study, the Home Office argued that

> … victims of more conventional forms of ID fraud can still spend many hours getting their credit history put right alongside the emotional distress. CIFAS estimates that victims spend, on average 60 hours correcting their records, whilst a US survey found that some victims can spend over 240 hours correcting their records. (Home Office, 2005, p. 19)

By 2006, identity fraud was still being offered as a primary rationale for the introduction of the scheme. Like all of the different types of justification offered by the Home Office at that stage, it was much less strongly emphasised. Statements were limited to comments

about the benefits of biometrics and their ability to "…prevent people using multiple or fraudulent identities." (Home Office, 2006, p. 11). Much less of an argument is presented, reflecting perhaps the fact that parliamentary approval has been received, and that the identity cards programme had moved into an implementation stage.

The prevention of fraud was a central component of the justifications offered by the Home Office for introduction. It was articulated in a consistent and definitive way throughout much of the policy process, and was more central in the executive than in the parliamentary arena.

Prevention and detection of crime

Once more, the form of the argument offered in the executive arena closely mirrors that offered in the parliamentary arena. Initially, the Home Office was a little reluctant to articulate its intention for the scheme to be used as a routine crime prevention tool. The 2002 Green Paper did see a role for the scheme in addressing serious crimes, but this did not extend to the cards being involved in the more routine police functions. Rather, the document highlighted how it was,

> … debatable whether an entitlement card scheme on its own would have a significant effect on other types of crime..... it is rarely the case that the police cannot identify suspects as most are already known to them. Those engaged in criminal activity are unlikely to carry a card. (Home office, 2002, p. 36)

Nevertheless, some efficiency savings were envisaged to be achieved by the scheme. For example, handheld card readers could be used to record the details of individuals, with their consent, if they "happened to be carrying a card at the time", whilst recognising that

this consent "… would not be forthcoming in all cases." (Home Office, 2002, p. 36). The potential for police use of biometrics for routine matters was considered, but downplayed, because the police's "… own biometric databases of fingerprints and DNA are much more sophisticated than anything envisaged for an entitlement card scheme." (Home Office, 2002, p. 37).

By 2004, the circumstances under which police would be able to use the card for day-to-day law and order activities was greatly broadened from being limited to issues of serious and organised crimes to the more general "… prevention and investigation of crime." (Home Office 2004, p. 22). Having previously been tentative about the potential for biometrics to aid the police in their enquiries, the Draft Legislation included a clause which made possible the checking of individual's biometrics against the NIR if alternative methods of identification had not proved to be fruitful. Retrospective checks on fingerprints held by police from at the scene of crimes were also envisaged (Home Office, 2004, p. 22).

The presentation of the cards as a tool for addressing normal or routine types of crime reached its crescendo in summer 2005. Documents at this time show that the prevention and detection of normal crimes was given the greatest emphasis by the Home Office in comparison with other justifications (2005b). Uses included "providing fast, reliable access to information on intelligence targets" (Home Office, 2005b, p. 3), identifying "incapacitated victims of crime" (p.3), finding missing persons, matching "scene of crime" fingerprint marks held on police databases, and helping in the administration of DNA police mass screening exercises (Home Office, 2005b, p.3). The card would also "help reduce the fear of crime and terrorism" (Home Office 2005b, p. 5), and engender

"reassurance and a safer society" by "increase the efficiency of police enquires, freeing up police resources" allowing the police to "focus on core crime prevention and detection activities" (Home Office, 2005b, p. 9).

In contrast, demonstrations of intention for the card scheme to be used in the prevention and detection of serious and organised crimes were more consistently present. Unlike other strands of the justification, the prevention of serious and organised crime was only ever moderately emphasised. Serious and organised crimes were often closely associated with the use of false and multiple identities, and so some degree of overlap existed between this strand of the justification and the issue of identity fraud. For example, Home Office documents state that identity fraud was,

> … linked to other crimes of conspiracy, fraud and deception, ranging from opportunistic impersonation to very sophisticated money laundering and people-trafficking operations. (Home Office, 2002, p. 29).

The misrepresentation of identity was therefore seen as a facilitator of other crimes, which lay beneath a great many social ills. By limiting individuals' ability to create multiple official identities, it was the belief of the Home Office at this time that identity documents would offer a means to deal with such issues.

The following year, the justification for introduction based on the prevention of serious crime gained greater prominence in comparison with the arguments offered by the Home Office during 2002. It also began to be linked more closely with terrorism, because the argument that an identity system could deal with organised crimes was easily transposed onto the issue of national security. By 2003, there was now "strong arguments" for giving

the police and other agencies access to the NIR to "…help fight serious crime and terrorism." (Home Office, 2003, p. 12).

> False and multiple identities are also essential 'tools of the trade' for organised crime to facilitate money laundering and also other crimes which cause the most misery in our communities such as drugs misuse and drug-related crimes, people-trafficking, prostitution and people working illegally in unsafe and overcrowded conditions. Disrupting these activities is a key priority. (Home Office, 2003, p. 7).

The argument presented identity cards as a viable solution for dealing with threats to society caused by the sorts of crimes which are facilitated by multiple official identities. Particular attention was given to the uses of the audit trail information that was to be collected and stored on the NIR each time the cards was used, or data were accessed. Its use was however limited only to those circumstances involving "serious crime" (Home office 2004, p. 22). In contrast, more general information could be disclosed without consent, for purposes connected with "prevention and investigation of crime" (Home Office, 2004, p. 39).

When comparing the representation of crime prevention across arenas, despite the similarities in the form that the argument took, its representation in the executive arena is characterised by greater consistency of emphasis over the lifetime of the proposals. Other similarities are also evident particularly in relation to the form of the discussion of "normal" and "serious and organised". When taken together, however, the extent to which crime as a rationale for introduction was appeal to in the executive arena was fairly moderate.

Illegal immigration and working

The issue of illegal immigration and working is strongly emphasised in a very consistent way in the executive arena. Indeed, when compared with the other justifications offered by the Home Office and government ministers for introduction, it is the measure which is most strongly argued for. The position that the card scheme would have a positive effect in this policy field is one which is consistently adhered to from the time of the scheme's inception, until 2006, when this justification, along with most of the others, fell away. Interestingly, the issues of illegal immigration and illegal working were run together throughout the whole of this process.

The view that the card scheme would be useful in the fight against illegal immigration and working was very strongly articulated in the Entitlement Cards Green Paper (Home Office, 2002b).

> By giving a clear indication that the holder of an entitlement card is lawfully resident in the UK, a card scheme could be a powerful weapon in combating illegal immigration. (Home Office, 2002b, p. 7)

By aiming to "…address the perception that once people manage to enter the country illegally they can work and obtain benefits and public services with impunity…", the Home Office suggested that the card scheme would give "greater credibility to legal migration routes into the country." (Home Office, 2002, p. 7). Using language which closely echoes that used by the Home Affairs Select Committee which initially suggested an investigation into entitlement cards in 2002 (HAC, 2001[8]), the Home Office in 2002

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[8] The 23rd January 2001 saw the publication of a Home Affairs Select Committee's (HAC) report that sought to instigate a debate on immigration policy. The document called for the Government to examine the 'pull factors' that attract people to the UK. Amongst its conclusions, the committee highlighted the issue of 'clandestine immigration' and the problems this poses for border control. To address these pull factors, the committee recommended that in addition to existing border controls, supplementary internal security checks

sought to reduce what it calls "the 'pull-factor" which "…draws people into organised networks of people trafficking" (Home Office, 2002, p. 7). As was noted in Chapter One, it seems that little came directly from this suggestion. However, the similarity of the language used, together with the similarity of the initial intention towards the type of policy instruments the scheme suggests a link between the two sets of proposals.

A further aspect of the expressed intention for the scheme to address "pull factors" included tackling the "…impression that those in the UK illegally can obtain work easily and those in the UK legally but with no right to work can also obtain employment…" (Home Office, 2002, p. 31). Connected to this was the perceived potential for illegal immigration and working to undermine the minimum wage. The argument suggests that much of this problem can be traced to the difficulty in establishing employment status, leading to confusion, and creating a difficult environment in which to prosecute unscrupulous employers. A universal entitlement cards scheme, it was argued, would assure that all individuals with a right to work in the UK would possess the appropriate card. Checks against the proposed database would therefore offer an employer a way of clearly discriminating between those who can, and those who cannot, legally work (Home Office, 2002).

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on access to work and public services should be considered, reflecting what was seen as the more successful immigration policy of the Schengen countries. The Committee noted the work of the 1996 HAC, in particular its conclusions that ""[i]t is likely that only an identity card which was either compulsory or which carried details of immigration status would have an impact on preventing illegal immigration." (HAC, 1996). However, due to the 'repugnance' they believed would be felt towards introducing compulsory identity cards that could be demanded by police, and by the possibility of causing "…setbacks in good race relations…" (HAC, 2001) the notion of identity cards was rejected by the 2001 committee. As an alternative, the concept of an 'entitlement cards' was introduced. The card would allow individuals to demonstrate their eligibility to access free public services and need not have any of the "…sinister connotations in terms of civil liberties…" (HAC, 2001, para. 84) that identity cards have. The card could play a part in reducing benefit fraud by ensuring that only those individuals entitle to free public services received them, and could also help to ensure that benefits where paid more efficiently. In contrast to a full identity card scheme, the committee advocated a card "… which the bearer would be expected to produce *only* when exercising a right or gaining access to a services." (HAC, 2001, para 85). The committee then went on to "…suggest that the Government consider a fundamental review - across all Departments - of the case for and against the introduction of an entitlement card system." (HAC, 2001, para. 87).

The following year, immigration again featured strongly as a justification for introduction. This, together with identity fraud, featured as the most strongly emphasised rationales to be put forward by the Home Office in the executive arena. The argument by this time had now developed to include not only the issues of illegal immigration and working, but also a suggestion of some of the macro social factors which might have brought about this situation. In particular, the Home Office emphasised how the "…traditionally depended on strong external border..." could no longer be relied on in "…today's changing world…" of mass migration (Home Office, 2003, p. 6). Once again, it was the "… lack of internal immigration controls…" which was identified as "…a major 'pull factor' that draws people here illegally." (Home Office, 2003, p. 6). Moreover, the consequences for British society of this issue were set out, but with social as well as economic costs being emphasised.

> Those who arrive and work illegally are often earning less than the minimum wage. This creates tensions in the resident community, especially with those on low incomes, and fosters fears among established minority ethnic groups that their acceptance may be undermined." (Home Office, 2003, p. 6)

> We need to continue to encourage people to come to the UK legitimately to work. At the same time, management of overall migration, including illegal migration must be effective in order to reassure the resident population in the UK." (Home Office, 2003, p. 6)

> If our communities have confidence in our immigration controls, they will be more welcoming of new arrivals, helping to promote a more cohesive society. (Home Office, 2003, p. 6)

Through addressing the issues of illegal immigration and the associated issue of illegal working, the identity cards scheme was argued to have a cohesive quality, promoting

confidence in the accuracy and efficiency of the Government's immigration policy, thereby encouraging a sense of shared citizenship.

Fraudulent use of public services was also an issue which concerned the Government at this point in the policy process, with the cards providing relief for "…hard-pressed public services." (Home Office, 2003, p.6). The lack of a card would "…provide a clear indication that a person is not entitled to free treatment." (Home Office, 2003, p. 7).

A similar position was maintained by the Home Office through until summer 2005, with the frequency and the centrality of the argument for identify cards on the basis of the impact they were to have on illegal immigration suggesting that this strand of the justification was highly emphasised. By summer 2005, this emphasis fell away in a similar way to all of the other arguments presented, with the Home Office adopting a more measured approach to their representation of intention.

The administration of public services

This aspect of the Government's position towards the stated rationale for introduction of the cards scheme was given greatest emphasis in the initial period during which the card scheme was conceptualised as an entitlement card. In particular, certain efficiency savings were suggested involving the use of a universal identifier associated with each entry on the National Register.

> There would also be savings for service providers as there would be a single definitive source of information about people's identity and possibly a unique personal number for everyone registered on the system. (Home Office, 2002, p. 7).

By "linking the core personal information to other databases which held service entitlement information" (Home Office, 2002, p. 13), the Home Office clearly saw the potential for the scheme's newly created definitive identity number to form the basis for administration across the public, and potentially, certain aspects of the private sector.

> Existing cards such as loyalty cards issued by retailers could use the entitlement card, saving the cost of producing and distributing cards. Organisations might also be able to make use of cards for internal purposes for example access control to their premises or computer systems. (Home Office, 2002, p. 28)

> The card and the central register would therefore be used as a gateway to entitlement to these other services. This would allow services to be added incrementally to the entitlement card scheme without the central database becoming too large to manage. (Home office, 2002, p. 60).

These far reaching aspirations which were given a moderate level of emphasis in the 2002 document, fell away as the scheme progressed. No mention is made at all of the potential for the scheme in this area until two years later in the *Regulatory Impact Assessment* (Home Office, 2004) published in May of that year. Once again, the potential improvements to the administration of public services were given only a moderate level of emphasis with a range of potential benefits being signalled including the "administration of social security benefits" (Home Office, 2004b, p. 20), as well as providing an "infrastructure for a one-stop shop for people to notify changes of personal details such as address" (Home Office, 2004b, p. 20). However, by contrast with the earlier position adopted by the Home Office, the later statements were much more cautious and much less definite, particularly when the implied function cuts across other government departments' areas of responsibility. An e-Government infrastructure was "…not currently part of the core proposition for ID cards but indicates some of the longer

term potential for the scheme to improve the delivery of public services." (Home Office, 2004b, p. 20).

The Home Office was also clear in pointing out that the proposal to "cross-reference their personal numbering systems with the NIRN" (National Identity Reference Number) was not "part of the immediate business justification for the scheme" (Home Office, 2005, p. 8). Further potential uses for the card scheme very similarly couched in these cautious terms.

> While not currently costed as part of the functions of the Identity Cards Scheme, it could also provide a basis for people to notify changes of personal details, such as address, only once. The scheme could then notify other Government services. (Home Office, 2005, p. 9)

From a position which sought to establish the potential benefits for the administration of government services as a significant aspect of the scheme, later statements retreated from the more assured earlier position to one which was content to point only to possibilities rather than clear intentions. This aspect of the policy did not occupy a central part of the broader menu of justifications offered by the Home Office at various times over the policy process. It is interesting to note, however, that in 2005 onwards, when the Home Office began to state its intentions less strongly, administrative potentials of the card were once again emphasised.

Convenience for the individual and promotion of citizenship

The intention for the card scheme to be used as a means to ease citizens' dealings with public services was one which can be clearly identified in the executive arena. In addition, in 2002, elements of some private sector functions were also envisaged. When compared across the range of justifications put forward, during the initial consultation stage, and on into 2003 with the publication of the White Paper (Home Office, 2002b), the department moderately emphasised this rationale. Whilst not highlighted to the extent of immigration or identity fraud, the strength of the demonstration of the intention was similar to that given to administration. It was, however, greater than that given to the issues of security of crime. In this context, the cards were presented as particularly useful in aiding citizens' interactions with the state. They were presented as offering a "convenient way to access services" (Home Office, 2002, p. 13), and their potential to remove the need for people to provide the "…same information many times over to different Government agencies" the Home Office sought to underscore the personal benefits to individuals of holding an entitlement card (Home Office, 2002, p. 13).

> A card could allow people to travel around Europe without the need to carry a passport book and might be useful to young people to help prove their age when purchasing age-restricted goods and services. (Home Office 2002, p. 8)

In addition to these individual benefits, the card also had a role to play in offering a means to increase social cohesion, because it might be "clearly linked to citizenship and could have important symbolic value for those who acquired citizenship" (Home Office, 2002, p. 34). Moreover, a number of uses were offered for the identity register, which could be designed to fulfil a variety of functions. The Home Office thought that,

> …people might find it useful to have other information held on the chip which was not visible on the card. Using the library example, the card could be used as a library card to borrow items as well as just enrolling the cardholder in the library in the first place. (Home Office, 2002, p. 16)

> The chip could also store personal information at the card-holder's discretion, for example medical information which might help assist treatment in an emergency. (Home Office 2002, p. 116)

As the scheme progressed, however, the range of uses for the scheme in this area declined. By 2003, the scheme's benefits extended only so far as offering the rather more moderate convenience of easing one's "dealings with private and public sector organisations" (Home Office 2003, p. 3), and later, offering a way to make financial transactions "simpler and more secure" (Home Office 2005b, p. 8).

Figure 5.1 below summarises the discussion in the preceding section of the chapter. It shows that in the executive arena, the issues of illegal immigration and identity related fraud were most strongly and consistently emphasised.

As was the case with figure 4.1, the darker shaded areas highlight the points of greater emphasis. In contrast to the parliamentary arena, the emphasis, although subject to some change, is much more stable in the executive arena

Figure 5.1. Intention towards 'ends', by strength of representation

Document	Date	Source	Individual	Normal	Serious	Fraud	Security	Immigration	Admin	Convenience	Citizen
Entitlement Cards and Identity Fraud Cm 5557	Jul-02	Official publication	Home Office								
Identity cards The Next Steps Cm 6020	Nov-03	Official publication	Home Office								
Draft legislation on identity cards - Consultation document	Apr-04	Official publication	Home Office								
RIA 2004	May-04	Official publication	Home Office								
Identity Cards Speech - IPPR	Nov-04	Speech	David Blunkett								
RIA 2005	May-05	Official publication	Home Office								
ID cards Scheme Benefit Overview	Jun-05	Official publication	Home Office								
ID Cards Speech at Biometric 2006 conference	Oct-06	Speech	Joan Ryan								
Strategic Action for the National Identity Scheme	Dec-06	Official publication	Home Office								

2. Capacity

In the parliamentary arena, we saw how the Government was willing to utilise its capacity to achieve its legislative ambitions in a number of different ways. These included the ability to impose constraints on its opponents on the floor of the Commons and in Standing Committee, with the effect of exerting control over the agenda of the debate. We also saw how the Government was willing to offer concessions to backbench MPs and peers on issues which fell outside the aspects of the legislation that were most central to

achieving its commitment to the set of "means". The fact of offering concessions was to justify the retaining of other, more central elements of the legislation, including the link between applications for passports, and enrolment on the NIR. By offering concessions, specific resources were used in ways which allowed for the building of capacity.

In the current chapter, the nature of the arena suggests a disaggregation of the analysis to help distinguish between actors operating at different levels. A distinction is therefore made between the contribution of the Government as a collective actor, individual government departments, and individual ministers. It proceeds by highlighting those elements of capacity identified in table 3.2 as being of potential significance in the executive arena.

Building capacity in the executive

The capacity to exert control over parliamentary time represents control over a powerful resource in both the parliamentary and in the executive arenas. This is a resource which flows from the fact of having a majority in the House of Commons, and of a political party or indeed a coalition, being in a position to form a government. This is "type a" capacity (see table 3.2). It is capacity to secure consent from others in another arena who have the *de jure* authority to veto the decision. The availability of this capacity is as a consequence of the Government's constitutional position. More specifically, it is the capacity to do so which extends from the executive, and into the parliamentary arena. However, in certain circumstances, or to achieve certain ambitions, such inherited

resources are not relevant, and so the capacity to achieve one's ends must be built by acquiring or gaining control over resources from elsewhere.

For example, there was a view in the Home Office that the stock of technical and project management expertise in the department during the early 2000s was not sufficient to implement a large scale technologically sophisticated IT scheme, such as the identity cards initiative. The Home Office lacked the specific "soft" resources of skills in this area. A contemporary government source makes this point.

> The Home Office isn't good at embracing new projects, new ideas, and they didn't have the project management skills, not just for that, for many other things, they'd had a total catastrophe over the passport agency…. Project management was only just on the horizon, people where only just really talking about it. (Government source, interview, 2010)

The view captured by the quotation is given some weight because of the activities of the Home Office Identity Cards Unit towards the end of 2003. After the end of the consultation exercise in 2003, the small Entitlement Cards Unit, as it was then called, was expanded to provide the capacity to move effectively into a policy delivery stage. This included the recruitment of a senior official, Nicky Roach, at the level of 'Director of Policy' (Grade 3) to work on building a consensus between government departments. As one government source described it, a key element of her role was to "do all the Whitehall politicking" (Interview, 2010). More pertinently, Katherine Courtney was recruited from the private sector towards the end of 2003, to fill some of the perceived gap in project management skills. This represents the capacity for effective *de facto* administration execution, after consent has been secured from the Cabinet, or those with *de jure* veto power, or type 'd' capacity.

There was a generic recruitment campaign going on in the Home Office for people with these sorts of skills, because there was a number of big projects like finger printing for visa applicants and other stuff that was going on. (Government source, interview, 2010)

Katherine arrived in the early autumn of that year, and that was a recognition, we we're banking on, yes we would have to have, we would get the policy agreement, the Home Office would then be saddled with a potentially very large delivery project, so John Gieve, the Permanent Secretary at the time, was keen to have somebody with that sort of delivery experience. (Government source, interview, 2010)

As well as pointing to a more general shortage of project management skills in the Home Office, the government source describe a conscious and deliberate process of capacity building, through securing "hard" and "soft" resources in the form of people and skills. This was achieved through the recognition of a skills shortage, and through the acquisition of those specialist skills from outside the Government, to take this technical policy forward. Moreover, this was done with the expectations of achieving, rather than having achieved, policy clearance at Cabinet level. This example relates to "type c" administrative capacity, whereby the Permanent Secretary exercises the formal authority from within the Home Office to capacity effective *de facto* administration execution, after consent has been secured from those with *de jure* veto power.

The process of achieving policy clearance is also relevant to this discussion of capacity building. Both agreement of the Cabinet and the willingness of other departments to cooperate were required before legislative time could be secured for this item of policy. At one level, the building of Home Office capacity in this context, must have taken the form of achieving a consensus so that technical, and institutional support was offered. This represents the capacity to secure consent from others in the same arena, with the *de jure* authority to veto that decision, or "type d" capacity. By contrast, efforts at secure

agreement at Cabinet level by the Principal Minister, in this case David Blunkett, require capacity at the political level from those who have the *de jure* authority to veto, "type b" capacity.

Achieving consensus at departmental level could be challenging because of a number of barriers which stood in the way. A stated aspiration for a scheme was to "…establish for official purposes a person's identity so that there is one definitive record of an identity which all government departments can use if they wish." (Home Office, 2002b, p. 7). The aspiration potentially cut across a number of other department's existing plans and areas of responsibility because proposals for similar large scale ICT restructuring projects, with population-wide or near population-wide databases of personal identities, were put forward by other departments at around the same time. This again is an issue of capacity to secure consent from others with the *de facto* authority to veto the decision. However, it is the capacity to do so, in the same arena, but at the administrative level. It is therefore an example of the exercise of "type d", administrative capacity.

It is necessary now briefly to review some of the efforts to build capacity, in order to examine the problem of coordination of administrative capacity, or "type e" capacity, which is the *coordination* of administrative capacity, especially at the technical and information management levels.

As stated above, the NIR proposals offered a number of areas for potential conflict with different government departments because the aspirations for the policy cut directly across a number of existing plans. This is an issue to which one prominent public sector

ICT professional refers to the potential for the "…fundamental undermining of departmental accountability" (IT industry commentator, interview, 2007).

> If you're operating e-enabled services based on a collective single identifier which allows the joining up of all the different aspects of somebody's service experience … and say some ID numbers become wrongly identified as criminals or illegal immigrants… you're then unable to give them welfare on your rules based system. You have a service disaster on your hands for which you're accountable. You get hauled over the coals, but the management of that issue is not under your control. (Ibid, 2007).

Powerful reasons exist for wanting the administration of the process of associating identities with particular records for public administration functions to take place within the department which delivers that service. This is also why ministers' capacity to secure agreement at Cabinet, ("type b" capacity) and capacity to achieve consent at the administrative level from those with *de facto* veto powers ("type d" capacity), might be difficult. The reason for this is that certain types of capacity rest on consent, not on powers of execution.

For example, as part of the response to the report published to investigate the death of Victoria Climbié in 1999 (Laming, 2003), a series of Green Papers were published as part of the *Every Child Matters* programme. Under the responsibility of the then Chief Secretary of the Treasury, the Rt. Hon Paul Boateng MP, the programme called for the greater accountability of government provided children's services, and for an emphasis on a more coordinated approach to service delivery between government services. The publication of the first of these Green Papers *Every Child Matters* (DfES, 2003), included a pledge to remove the existing barriers to information sharing across public service providers. This was to be achieved through legislative changes to allow for more data sharing between agencies, and eventually through the creation of an "information hub"

and the attribution of unique personal identifiers to individuals on that system. Common data standards were to be established to ensure that information uploaded about a particular child at a local level could be shared through the hub, and matched accurately with other records via the unique personal identifier. Health professionals who had concerns about a child's wellbeing could then flag that child's record, so that their concerns could be shared with other agencies which might interact with that child in the future. The ambition was to avoid the series of oversights and lack of coordination that was blamed for allowing the tragic death of Victoria Climbié (Lambing, 2003, p. 52-56).

The database was created in legislation with the working little of '*Information Sharing Index'* (ISI), under the Children's Act (2004). Following consultation, the database was renamed "ContactPoint" in 2007, before it became operational in late 2009. On the 12th May after the 2010 General Election, the new coalition Government announced its intention to scrap the ContactPoint database (BBC News, 2010).

Similarly, in 2003, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) announced its IT strategy for the introduction of a single customer database of personal information. Its aim was to rationalise service delivery across the DWP. Designed and run by the IT directorate of the Pension Service, the Customer Information System (CIS) was launched in 2005 to "provide an overview of the personal details and benefit history of anyone who has a National Insurance number" (Hearmon, 2007, para. 6). This system was designed to operate alongside the multiple, legacy IT systems operating in the DWP, which it used to administer the range of benefits under its remit. Rather than acting as an immediate replacement, the new CIS database was designed so that over time, information would be fed into it from the legacy systems. Eventually, the CIs would be the DWP's central

information repository for critical personal information, and once this information was transferred, the various legacy systems could be switched off (Collins, 2005).

The Department of Health (DoH) also had plans of its own for centralised population-wide, or near population-wide records of personal information. From as early as 1998, the DoH had been seeking to establish a central database of patient records, as well as online access to those records for clinicians and other health professionals (NHS Executive, 1998). The publication of a series of White Papers including *NHS Plan* (DoH, 2000), and *Building the information core: Implementing the NHS Plan* (DH, 2001) set out the DoH's aims to modernise service delivery in the NHS, including the information and IT infrastructure to support these changes. In the context of these ambitions the *National Programme for IT* (NPfIT) was established in October 2002. The central objective of the programme was the rationalisation of administration and improvement of service delivery through the use of the *NHS Care Record Service*. An integral part of this new system was the replacement of existing locally administered NHS records with a centralised repository of patient's clinical information, available across the UK. This information could then be uploaded to the NHS "Spine" along with other patient data, and be shared across the DoH. One aim was for clinicians from different areas who were treating the same patient to have access to that patient's record which would be associated with their NHS number.

A second issue relates to costs. Initial set up costs of the identity cards scheme were to be met by the Home Office, with fees paid for passports to cover the cost of issuing the card itself. However, several different types of cost were to be associated with other departments' use of the scheme. This was especially the case if, as the 2002 consultation

document suggested, these other department were to have access to the database to allow them to make their own checks on individual's identities (Home Office, 2002b, p. 82). Indeed, the view that certain costs were to be shared was echoed by the *Transformational Government* White Paper (Cabinet Office, 2005). The first of these costs relates to the "back office" integration of a new identity number with existing IT systems. Back office integration would be particularly difficult and costly, as the vast majority of legacy schemes had been developed without the identity cards scheme number in mind. Specifically, the process of designing the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) scheme predated any substantive work on the nature of the proposed identity register, and so could not have taken into account the identifier proposed by the Home Office plans. These operational costs associated with restructuring systems in line with Home Office proposals might offer "powerful disincentives" for cross departmental take up of the identity number (Dunleavy, 2005).

The form in which the scheme was initially proposed, envisaged that other departments would make extensive use of a service offered by the Home Office for validation of individuals' claims to identities. This implies a whole series of "front office" infrastructure costs, potentially, but not restricted to, a "…nation-wide network of easily accessible biometric recording devices." (Home Office, 2002b, p. 55). As the proposals developed, it transpired that a Chip and PIN approach was to be favoured over biometric readers for most transactions. However, the ambiguity over this issue in the initial stage of the proposals once more presents a disincentive for other departments to agree to accommodate the scheme.

Although the data on this issue are far from conclusive, it does not support the supposition outlined above. Indeed, interview data suggests that a number of government agencies were keen to be involved. In addition to UKPS plans for a passport card, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) were described as being "…very keen to be involved…", but their enthusiasm was tempered by the Department for Transport (DfT) which takes the policy lead, and which were much less keen. From the Home Office perspective, the DfT were concerned to "…keep DVLA in their box" (Interview, senior civil servant, 2010).

> They had no interest in expanding the scope of their work. So it wasn't so much get off my turf, it more I'm happy with the size of the lawn I've got, and not interested in expanding it. (Government source, interview, 2010)

At an official level at least, the interaction between departments was not characterised by pronounced disputes. A number of concerns were raised about the possible implications for the future development of the identity cards system, by for example, the DoH which expressed concerns about patient confidentiality, and sought assurances throughout that the National Health Number would not be used as a broader identity number (Government source, interview, 2010). Nevertheless, on the process of seeking cross-departmental policy agreement for the consultation in early 2002, one well-placed government source recalled how most departments were "fairly relaxed" about plans for a Green Paper on entitlement cards. For this individual, the attitude was not a surprising one.

> They weren't being committed to anything, so it wasn't as thought there would be immediate decisions made that would necessary affect them. They didn't see any of their resources at risk, in terms of being pinched to go and fund an ID card project or programme, so I think very much, they took their steer from their political masters. (Government source, interview, 2010)

As plans progressed, it seems that the communication of intention between government departments was different from the wider ambitions outlined in the *Transformational Government* White Paper (Cabinet Office, 2005). Less emphasis was placed, in the short term at least, on cross-government efficiencies. Most of the issues raised by the identity cards scheme which related to or impacted on other departments, were not firmly cemented, and represented opportunities for the future, rather than firm plans. Departmental concerns that did exist were focused at the level of substantive issues about costs and deliverability, rather than concerns of principle. On the process of securing an agreement between departments, one government source explains how the scheme was perceived in Whitehall.

> …once the department's realised that their resources are not at risk, they were not bothered. We kept engaging with department through a public sector forum, so that they were constantly appraised of the how the policy was developing as so forth, but in essence, I think that big engagement with departments would have been once the system had been up and running, how are to going to use it to access your services, and so forth. But we never got to that position. (Government source, interview, 2010)

> The perception was, 'If it's not putting my budget at risk, if it's not putting any of my projects at risk. Providing that my minister is not overly engaged on the principles of it, by and large, off you go', and that's really how this process works. (Government source, interview, 2010)

> …are they going to pay the Home Office lots of money to introduce ID cards? Nope. There're much more likely to stand on the side lines and wait till it's happened and say great, now we're going to reap some of the benefits. (Government source, interview, 2010)

Presenting the argument in this way offered those who were leading on the policy from the Home Office to present a more compelling argument. This is evidence of "type d" capacity.

On the issue of taking direction from politicians, one source suggests that, because of the controversial nature of this proposal, government officials found themselves in a difficult and often uncomfortable position.

> But this was an issue which, officials sometimes find it hard to do. When it's clear that your minister will have a view…. officials don't feel on a position to advise… you have to wait for a political steer. (Government source, interview, 2010)

> Whereas normally, officials prepare the factual pros and cons of different options…. and they're sort of in command of the arguments, and so forth. It's a different policy in that respect, than others I've worked on. (Government source, interview, 2010)

The concern over allocation of departmental resources might offer an explanation for why the cross-governmental benefits of the scheme were, after being initially strongly emphasised by the Home Office, backed away from as time wore on.

Departments were only required to commit resources at some unspecified point in the future, and so debates on this issue were not wholly relevant to the short term problem. By 2004, for example, these benefits, although still present in Home Office documents as aspirations, were "not part of the business case for the scheme" (Home Office, RIA, 2004). By backing away from a strong demonstration that the other departments would be required to buy into the scheme, a potentially contentious issue was removed from the agenda. This further emphasises a disjuncture between the demonstrations of intention from the Home Office, and the transformational Government White paper (Cabinet Office, 2005).

At a political level, Blunkett was required to exercise a quite different element of capacity. The strategy adopted by Blunkett was to ensure that his position was supported

by adequate political "weight". Efforts to achieve cabinet clearance through the Domestic Affairs Committee relied heavily on support from the Prime Minister, and Blunkett's diary makes much of the strategic importance of securing the support of Blair for the identity cards policy in May 2003. In a diary excerpt from later that year, Blunkett recalls how at Cabinet, the PM had made his position on the issue clear.

> We then had a discussion on ID cards. Tony was very firm on this issue…. he took the bold decision to indicate that drafting time would be made available for preparation of a Bill, and that the Domestic Affairs Committee was to address the technical issues and practical barriers rather than the principle. (Bunkett, 2006 p. 521)

This suggests Blunkett made efforts to build "type b" capacity. It also suggests that a departmental consensus was never, in the end, achieved, and that it went through Cabinet mainly as a result of PM intervention. Indeed, Blunkett's view of the impact of the Prime Minister's support at Cabinet demonstrates a belief that the additional authority of the Prime Minister was sufficient to force the policy through a tough stage in negotiations between the Home Secretary and the more sceptical members of the Cabinet. The wording of this statement is also significant. Although the diary presents a strongly articulated and decisive action on the part of the PM in support of the Home Secretary, the use of the word "indicated" is a significant qualification to the presumed decisiveness of the statement. Blunkett characterises this relationship as being supportive when necessary, but with the Home Secretary taking the lead. On Blair's interest in the scheme, first during interview, and secondly in his published memoirs, Blunkett remarked,

> He'd got loads on his plate, and therefore it was just, get on with it. I mean, he came in at crucial moments to defend it, and to ensure that when the steam roller started to roll, we could overcome it. (Blunkett, interview, 2010)

> He said: 'I know that round the table there are disagreements. There are disagreements by those close to me, but has anyone anything at this stage to say about the proposition that we should go forward with the consultation as agreed?' There was silence. It was a really helpful way of giving me the go-ahead, in providing the department with the political backing needed, and above all strengthening the hand of our ministerial team and therefore our clout with the civil service in getting the job done. (Blunkett, 2006, p. 521)

Rather than providing direct verbal support, the PM's behaviour tacitly aligned himself with the idea that the Government should go forward with the consultation. After this intervention, any opposition from Cabinet members at that point would be read as contradicting the views of the Prime Minister. In this way, the Prime Minister positioned himself in front of challenges to continuation with plans for the scheme. Similarly, Blunkett diary suggests that to sustain this support, he sought frequent contact with the Prime Minister.

> I am speaking to Tony more often at the moment than in the whole of the time since May 1997, and it must be driving him mad. When I am not meeting him, I am talking to him on the phone virtually every other day. I would like to say for posterity that this is normal, but it isn't. It just reflects the enormity of the issues at the moment and the controversies – and the need for mutual support, on ID cards in particular. (Blunkett, 2005, p. 544)

Without directly backing the scheme, Blair was willing to lend the Home Secretary his support on those occasions when it was felt that additional impetus was required. In lending support, the Prime Minister was offering his authority to the Home Secretary, passed on through his backing of Blunkett's position. By association, the PM's authority granted Blunkett greater authority in his dealings with the Cabinet, and offered his strongly held views on the identity cards policy greater credibility.

The significance of access to these soft resources provided by forming coalitions is reflected in the Home Secretary's and the Prime Minister's assessment of the opposition

facing the identity cards proposal, thus building "type b" capacity. Discussion a conversation with the Prime Minister, Blunkett recounted the events which occurred following his defeat at the DA subcommittee meeting in early November 2003.

> I gave him a complete rundown of who was for and against. It became clear that it was really two thirds to one third in favour with regard to numbers but not with regard to weight. I agreed that we would put a couple of items in that didn't further water down the statement – about the Office of Government Commerce gateway process and anything that needed to be put in to reassure business. (Blunkett, 2005, p. 554)

The numerical advantage of those opposed to the policy was clearly not perceived as being significant by the PM or the Home Secretary when compared with the more intangible quality of political "weight". There is also evidence in this statement of a belief that the issue raised by the dissenters in Cabinet could be dealt with through non-essential concessions, such measures to reassure business.

Finally, it was not only the support of the Prime Minster which was important for building capacity in the executive arena, and therefore to obtaining the necessary legislative time for the identity cards policy. A second important issue was the broad base of public support for the scheme, and the weight this gave to the Home Secretary's position when discussing the issue with Cabinet.

> …there was quite a lot of enthusiasm when we announced it from the public…. if the polls hadn't shown substantial support for it, even support for people having to pay, because there was overwhelming support if they didn't have to pay, it would have been much more difficult. (Government source, interview, Interview, 2010)

Through the support of the PM, and a significant number of "weighty" individuals in Cabinet, the Home Secretary was able to build capacity by acquiring resources from alliances with key individuals.

A further critical aspect of this process of building capacity for commitment was the necessity of gaining support from the Treasury for the scheme. Because this related to actors within the same arena, and because it involves an operation at the political level, this is an example of "type b" capacity. As was shown earlier in the chapter, at a departmental level, efforts to gain Treasury support for the policy were met with a muted response. As one government source recalled, "…they kept things very much to themselves at that time…" (Government source, interview, 2010). The central message from the Treasury was that there would be no additional money made available for the Home Office. Its stance was "…a resources thing, they were not interested in finding any more money… [but] in terms of the policy input I don't recall them actually making very much substantive contributions to the debate to that extent." (Government source, interview, 2010).

> …it was very much discussions around agreeing what the costs and benefits, potentially were of the system, whether it was containable within Home Office resources, as it were, satisfying the Treasury at that time, the Treasury money people, rather than policy, the figures stood up, made sense, that this wasn't going to be a project that would cost twenty times more than was originally said. (Government source, interview, 2010)

The pragmatic stance adopted by the Treasury was not repeated at Cabinet level, albeit for different reasons. The Chief Secretary of the Treasury, Rt Hon Paul Boateng was strongly opposed to identity cards on civil liberties grounds. As a government source recalls,

> Oh, Paul Boateng was very very upset at the idea of having ID cards initially for immigrants, he was really against, he thought we were being very tough and cruel on asylum seekers and new migrants. (Interview, government source, 2010)

Clearly, Boateng was opposed a scheme might lead to the disproportionate demanding by police officers of production of cards from people from ethnic minorities. During the early 2000's, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) was also interested in the potentials offered by population wide records of personal information. The ONS was asked by the Treasury to investigate the possibility of creating a population register of contact information to be used across public services. The impetus for this investigation came from a Treasury-chaired, rather than a cabinet committee. The Public Service Productivity Panel under the responsibility of Paul Boateng had sponsored the work that was to become known as the Citizen Information Project (CIP). With the aim of providing public service efficiencies, the CIP was designed to explore the idea of a single population register for use across the whole of the public sector. Rather than a fresh database, as was the plan with the NIR, this register was to be created by bringing together the populations of the different existing registers currently used by the Government to record citizen information. As the Registrar General for England and Wales, Len Cook described in his evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee, "By pooling the dealings that the state has with its citizens it will approximate the total population in its coverage…" (Cook, 2004). In contrast to the identity cards scheme, the CIP was for all residents in the UK, and did not involve a token carried by the data subject to be produced in order to access services.

Officials in the Home Office did not view the CIP very positively. A government source close to these debates describes it as "very much a technocratic solution to the perceived problem" and "rather an ill thought out policy…. it was a bit like an identity register by

the back door". Moreover, this concern was shared at ministerial level, where the lack of public involvement and debate in the proposed CIP scheme was seen as problematic.

> Home Office Ministers, were very concerned about the thinking and the handling behind that proposal, because essentially it was doing a massive data mining and matching exercise on the key records that were held about people as individual, without their concern, without their knowledge… it didn't give the degree of citizen control and involvement in the process, that something like the ID cards legislation, which involved a specific application for a document, so you knew you were going through this process…. it lacked this transparency. (Government source, interview, 2010)

> …the Treasury were, I think, keen to have that option explored, because they saw it as maybe a cheap way of achieving that objective, but I think it wouldn't have stood up to any rigorous public debate, had it ever been exposed to that level. (Government source, interview, 2010)

In the context of the two proposed schemes which both sought to establish population wide registers of personal identities for use across a range of public services, the nature of the interaction between the Home Office and Treasury ministers was coloured by an underlying departmental tension. As a government source explained, the debate at Cabinet between the Treasury and the Home Office over this issue were in part, departmentally-led.

> …there were issues over which was to take precedence, very much so, and as all of us where, I plead as guilty as anyone else to this, there's departmentalism. Civil servants like to own particular projects. They like their ministers to be sent off to defend the departmental interest, and to be very exclusive about it. (Government source, Interview, 2010)

In June 2005, the CIP published its final report and recommendations (ONS, 2005). The report concluded that for reasons of efficiency, as well as to avoid the duplication of information, the aims of the CIP should be delivered through the NIR (ONS, 2005, p. 2).

The data show us that in departmental terms, the Treasury was not willing to present barriers to the Home Office, either in the form of opposition on principle, or by offering policy arguments for the adoption of an alternative scheme. The Treasury was however, willing to veto the allocation of additional resources beyond those which were already in the possession of the Home Office. This was a contributing factor in forcing the Home Office to look for alternative ways to finance the scheme, and it settled on the link between identity cards as designated document. The significant disputes between the Treasury and the Home Office were confined to Cabinet level discussions. With respect to the process of building capacity, whilst additional hard resources were not available, the Home Office's ability to secure the acquiescence of the Treasury was adequate.

The element of capacity required to bring this legislation forward is only one, political, aspect of this strand of the definition. This represents both "type a" and "type b", elements of political capacity whereby the nature of influence over other is in the form of persuasion and/or political leadership and authority. As the data make clear, the Home Office was also willing to engage in the process of exercising its *de facto* administrative capacity, to build its capacity through the acquisition of skills and expertise.

This discussion has shown that the following elements of capacity were most important in this arena. These were firstly "type b" capacity, or the *political* capacity to secure consent from others operating in the same arena who have the *de jure* authority to veto decisions. This was particularly pronounced in respect of Blunkett's dealing with his cabinet colleagues, in efforts to reach policy consensus. Tellingly, it was pivotal for this process that the Prime Minister was willing to offer his support. This clearly bolstered the Home Secretary's capacity to achieve his policy goals. Secondly, "type d" capacity also seems

to have been important in efforts at the administrative level to secure consent from those with actors with *de facto* authority to veto decisions, although the data on this issue is not conclusive.

Finally, although it was expected that "type f" capacity would be important to this process, the data does not support any inferences about specific operational level details.

Capacity between arenas

Home Office officials were prepared to use capacity to pursue outcomes in different ways. This includes a willingness to dictate the terms of access to the policy making machinery, when dealings with external groups and regulatory agencies. This represents willingness to exercise capacity across arenas.

The nature of the Government's interaction with the Information Commissioner serves to illustrate this point. Although sponsored by the Ministry of Justice, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is a non-departmental public body which reports directly to Parliament. Its role is predominantly one of the oversight and enforcement of regulation[9], rather than the execution of specific policy. However, the ICO's role does extend to efforts to influence the direction of the development of public policy in line with the aims of data protection and privacy law. The then Information Commissioner, Richard Thomas, expressed strong reservations about the proposed scheme. In the ICO's reply to

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[9] The OIC is responsible for the enforcement and oversight of the Data Protection Act (1988), the Freedom of Information Act (2000), as well as certain UK Statutory Instrument - Environmental Information Regulations (2004), as well as EC Directive - Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations (2003)

the Entitlement Cards Green Paper (Home Office, 2002b), Thomas drew attention to a number of areas where he felt some unease toward the proposed legislation. Whilst concluding that the European experience with state issued identity cards shows there to be no inherent reason for all such schemes to be rejected on data protection grounds, there was still "substantial risks" attached to the proposals proceeding as drafted. In particular, the desire for a single "monolithic" database was of concern, as were the implications for data sharing and the potential for "function-creep" where the uses for the scheme increase *ad hoc* over time, beyond those the scheme was originally intended for. The Information Commissioner was "not satisfied that the current proposals would lead to establishing a data protection compliant scheme", warning that these are "…not optional features but mandatory legal safeguards." (Thomas, 2003, p. 6).

The Commissioner's position towards the proposals hardened as the policy developed. With the publication of the Draft Legislation on Identity Cards (Home Office, 2004) the Information Commissioner's statements grew more critical.

> As the detail of this infrastructure – and the full magnitude of the proposals – start to emerge, my previous healthy scepticism has turned to increasing alarm. (Thomas, 2004, p. 1)

Commenting on the publication of the legislation a year later, the extent of the data collected and retained on the NIR was deemed to be "…unwarranted and intrusive…", and another component of what the Commissioner referred to as the "…infrastructure of the surveillance society." (Thomas, 2005b, p. 2).

The ICO cited several key issues with the Home Office plans which it felt were most alarming from a data protection and privacy perspective. These concerns included the

nature and the extent of the personal information collected and retained on the National Identity Register, and the associated issue of function creep. In particular, the ICO was most alarmed by the prospect of organisational and financial imperatives creating pressure for the scheme to be used in way that were not initially envisaged. Similar concern was expressed about the expansion of the uses to which the system would be put over time (Thomas, 2004a). The risk of the police requiring the card was also raised as an issue at an operational level. Although the legislation would not require individuals to carry the card, the Commissioner expressed concern about the potential for the police to presume guilt of those who choose not to do so. To this end, much more clarity about statutory purpose was called for, as well as more clarity about the extent of the access to the register for checking personal identity information.

Other areas of data protection concern were the nature and the extent of the "registrable facts" held on the NIR. Given that the scheme's aim was to establish an individual's identity, the Information Commissioner's position was that the relevance of collecting and retaining information such as (i) all other places of residence, (ii) other previous identities and (iii) previous residential status, was excessive. In addition, it was the Commissioner's view that such practices would be inconsistent with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd principles of the Data Protection Act (1988).[10]

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[10] The first, second and third principles of the data protection Act (1988) are,
1. Personal data shall be processed fairly and lawfully and, in particular, shall not be processed unless-
(a) at least one of the conditions in Schedule 2 is met, and
(b) in the case of sensitive personal data, at least one of the conditions in Schedule 3 is also met.
2. Personal data shall be obtained only for one or more specified and lawful purposes, and shall not be further processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose or those purposes.
3. Personal data shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose or purposes for which they are processed.

A direct assessment of the influence of the ICO's position towards the identity cards proposals for the development of the Government's policy is a challenging task. It is clear that a number of mechanisms existed whereby the Information Commissioner was able to express these concerns. This certainly provided the opportunity for the ICO to exert its perspective. These opportunities included a series of bi-lateral meetings between senior civil servants and the ICO during which data protection issue raised by the NIR were addressed. Moreover, the broader position of the ICO was well reported in the press, and the Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner, Jonathan Bamford, gave evidence at the influential Home Affairs Select Committee for a hearing on the identity cards proposals, which again elevated the profile of the ICO's position.

It is also clear that several of the recommendations suggested by the ICO were incorporated into the legislation. Most clearly, the restrictions on an individual's "rights to access" under the Data Protection Act 1998 in relation to "audit" or "data trail" information, were mooted in the Draft Bill (Home Office, 2004). These were later removed when the Bill was laid before Parliament in November 2004. This change occurred after the ICO pointed out that the subject access exclusions already existed in respect of national security and prevention of crime within the original data protection legislation (Thomas, 2004b). Similarly, a number of additional changes were made in line with ICO's recommendations, including the inclusion of the purpose of the legislation as a clause in the Bill, and restrictions on unwarranted demands for access to NIR.

The extent to which the ICO presented arguments which suggests a palpable risk to the Home Office proposals is not entirely clear. It is true that a number of changes to the legislation came about after suggestions made by the ICO, but the Information

Commissioner was not the only source of such suggestions. For example, similar points were reflected in the Home Affair Select Committee Report on Identity Cards (Home Affairs Committee, 2004). The ICO had presented its arguments whist giving evidence to the Home Affairs Committee (HAC), but given the multiple sources of such advice to the HAC, the most that can be reasonably inferred from this evidence is that the ICO contributed to the development of the HAC position.

What is clear, however, is that the ICO felt that it had made an impact, albeit in conjunction with the work of other groups and organisations. By presenting clear and consistent arguments, and without being allied too closely with the anti-ID cards lobby, the ICO felt that it had certainly "fettered Home Office's ambition". As Jonathan Bamford, the Assistant Information Commissioner and policy lead on identity cards in the ICO reflected during interview,

> I think what we've managed to do is make sure that ministers' have been kept on their toes. I mean, they really have had to think about things, and their officials have had to justify things to ministers when we're putting questions to them all the time... (Bamford, Interview, 2006).

> There's better scrutiny as a result of our intervention, and I do think we got some success in terms of elevation in the media. (Bamford, Interview, 2006).

From the alternative perspective of government officials, none of the interviewees gave much attention to the impact of the ICO on the development of identity cards policy. Even when pressed directly on the subject, very few comments were offered. An examination of the legislation itself also suggests that the Information Commissioner was not a major thorn in the side of the Home Office during the development of this policy.

The progress cited by the Commissioner included alteration to legislative proposals including a removal of restrictions on access rights to information about who had accessed an individual's record on the NIR were seen as a victory by the IOC. Whilst this might be a significant change, it made no difference to the central policy ambitions of the Home Office. These were to restrict a data subject's access to information about inquiries made by the Security Services on their own record. Exclusions were already available under existing Freedom of Information and Data Protection legislation, and so the particular clause in the Bill was unnecessary. The Home Office was able to grant this concession whilst still being able to achieve its ambitions. The "means" to which the Home Office were committed were not significantly altered by this concession, and remained intact. Similarly, the inclusion of statutory purposes for the proposed scheme on the face of the Bill did not alter the stated policy ambitions of the Home Office.

On the issue of the retention of audit trail data, the ICO admits to being less successful. As Bamford reflects,

> …" it's a dilemma in data protection terms, because it's good to have an audit trail because that detects misuse, but it's bad to have an audit trail that lasts for too long because that shows somebody's use and you learn something about their lives….
>
> At one point the Home Office said, well, you asked for the audit trail. We said, well, yes, we wanted a short audit trail to detect misuse but what we didn't think of doing was going to keep and let the police have access to it an all the rest of it. There's a big difference between system security audit trails and an audit trail that can be used by law enforcement bodies…. but you know, that gives you an idea about how we have a dialogue. (Bamford, interview, September 2006)

The Information Commissioner was successful to the extent that the work of the ICO highlighted a number of issues with the legislation as it was initially proposed, which the Home Office was willing to amend. In a sense, the ICO offered the Home Office access

to specialised policy expertise in the field of privacy and data protection issues. From the Government's perspective, securing the acquiescence of the ICO on particular aspects of the card systems design also offered the Government a degree of legitimacy, perhaps reflecting the reason why the first public body that was contacted by the Home Office during the initial consultation stage was the Information Commissioner. But perhaps more importantly, the consultations between the Home Office and external organisations, including but not restricted to the IOC, offered the opportunity to address issues in the design of the proposed implementation of the legislation that it might otherwise have missed. Although not willing to consult on principle, offering the opportunity to raise issues about detail provided the Home Office with an insurance against potential criticism in the future. By exercising the ability to dictate the terms of the consultation, and because of the ICO's desire to remain credible by conforming to and operating within these constraints, the Home Office was able to insulate itself from the risks which might otherwise be associated with a dialogue with a vocal and influential public body.

In this respect, the Home Office and its minister demonstrated a strong degree of commitment on this limb of the definition. The Home Office and Blunkett were not only able to build sufficient capacity, but were also effective in exercising their capacity, to exert control over potentially risky issues.

3. Assets at Hazard

As in the parliamentary arena, there were a number of points when it was necessary for actors to mobilise resources which they valued in situations of risk, so that they could

achieve their goals. The efforts to press the identity cards proposals so that legislative time could be obtained for the policy meant that the Home Office and the Home Secretary were required to mobilise their resources in situations of potential risk. At ministerial level, sharp divisions at Cabinet over both the principle of the scheme, and its proposed form presented challenges for Blunkett. It was required that the Home Secretary Blunkett put certain political resources at risk in order to continue to pursue policy agreement for the identity cards scheme. A series of correspondence between Ministers were leaked to the press, which point to these division in Cabinet.

Reported in *The Times*, the then Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, expressed deep concerns about the scheme, arguing that he believed the

> …proposed plan to be fundamentally flawed and no tinkering with particular issues will be able to resolve what is a fundamental political matter. (Cracknell, 2003, p. 3)

> We remain as far apart as ever on the acceptability of charging. How will we get people to accept a fee system when asylum seekers get the card free? (Ibid)

> The potential for a large-scale debacle which harms the Government is great, and any further decisions on the next steps must be made collectively. I will continue to urge strongly that this issue be shelved. (Ibid)

Similarly, Paul Boateng, the Chief Secretary to the Treasury also wrote to Blunkett expressing concerns, and suggesting that an alternative agenda be pursued. Again, this correspondence was leaked to the press.

> There may well be alternative options that would provide us with a series of quick wins with much lower risks and costs. (Cracknell, 2003, p. 3)

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> It is worth nothing that under a fully compulsory option, the charge for the card may be classified as a tax by the Office for National Statistics. The practical points raised by cabinet are substantial, though not insurmountable. (Ibid)

For Straw, the issues highlighted were seen as being potentially damaging to the Government. The opposition of the Foreign Secretary in this correspondence is absolutely clear and resolute, and implies that concessions were unlikely. The lack of caveats in the statement directly pitched the Foreign Secretary's authority against that of the Home Secretary, and created a situation where risks to certain political resources were great. By contrast, the views expressed by Boateng were couched in more moderate terms, leaving open a way open for conciliation between his position and the proposed scheme, his was nonetheless similarly negative and sought to offer more favoured alternatives.

In the context of this strongly voiced opposition from very senior cabinet colleagues, the danger of a Cabinet split on this issue was clear. In the case of Straw, rather than being able to resolve the impasse through offering concessions on points of policy, Blunkett was required to put his political asset of authority directly at risk. Importantly, the data suggested that Blunkett was acutely aware of this risk. Drawing on extensive interview data, Blunkett's biographer suggests that the Home Secretary saw the task of reaching agreement, particularly in the Domestic Affairs Cabinet Committee, as a "battle" over identity cards which he found personally "incredibly difficult" (Pollard, 2005, p. 14).

These risks were not confined to Blunkett and to his authority and credibility as a political actor. They had significant implications for the continued survival of the policy. In the autumn of 2003, the level of disagreement within the Domestic Affairs (DA) Cabinet sub-committee was such that Home Office ambition for the policy announcement to be included in the November 2003 Queens Speech was thwarted. Blunkett recalled how,

during a decisive Committee debate, he was unable to achieve the required level of support to reach an agreement.

> In the end, while there was considerable support for heavyweights such as Charles Clarke and John Reid, there were sufficient voices raised against to warrant John Prescott indicating that a final decision could not be taken on the matter and that he would have to report back to the Prime Minster and the Cabinet that we couldn't make a decision on that basis. (Blunkett, 2006, p. 554)

Whilst referring to Blunkett's propensity to take such risks a former colleague, cited but unnamed by Pollard (2005), refers to identity cards in this context. Blunkett is described as,

> …prepared to take big political risks in terms of his own reputation and relationships with colleagues – closing Sangatte and ID cards, for example – because he thinks you need to take really big steps forward to get anywhere. (Pollard, 2005, p.25).

In the context of the political debate around gaining cabinet consensus, it is relevant that a former colleague also assessed the situation as one which carried great political risk. The Home Secretary's authority and credibility were clearly at hazard in this situation. Nevertheless, because of the coalition built with senior cabinet members, and importantly with the patronage of the PM, policy agreement was finally reached.

Even in winning the battle with Cabinet over the cards, engaging in these sorts of activities carried costs. For Blunkett, the opportunity costs of the process were significant.

> It always costs you what I call 'dry powder'. There's only so many big arguments you can have, and if you're having a big argument about this, then you're not having a big argument about something else. (Blunkett, interview, 2010)

> You expend goodwill and political clout, and it comes to the point that the PM, having backed you on so many issues as he did, it becomes, 'Oh God no, he's going to go to Tony again', and 'do we have to put up with that?'. That leads to resentment, and a kind of underlying simmering bitterness about 'he's always getting his way', and people just talking to each other behind the scenes saying' don't you think we should take him down a peg or two'. I was aware of it, but I didn't take account of it as much as I might have done. I sort of just got my head down and just charged. (Blunkett, interview, 2010)

The notion of "dry powder" used in this context seems to imply a number of different intangible resources, include the notion of political authority, and also credibility in the eyes of others. There was also a clear recognition of their finite nature, and the opportunity costs associated with their expenditure. Despite this, the Home Secretary was prepared to continue to utilise the support of the PM, to the point at which his own credibility was at hazard. As the former Home Secretary explains, in such situations, it is possible to get to the point at which the argument has been taken too far.

> … when you feel the antagonism. The resentment turns into genuine antagonism, and there are other big issues to be fought, which you believe are going to be severely damaged by you pushing this particular one too far. (Blunkett, interview, 2010)

What is significant is that in this case, the relevant actors were aware of this potential, and despite this, are willing to push on regardless. On the possibility of feelings of resentment generated as a result of his position on identity cards being felt in Cabinet in 2003.

> I think it probably did. Probably on ID cards more than anything else. (Blunkett, interview, 2010)

The acknowledgement by Blunkett of the perception of the depletion of these resources, and of the opportunity costs associated with their expenditure, therefore provide strong evidence, within this framework, for commitment on this strand of the definition.

The risks faced by Home Secretary in attempting to achieve consensus for this policy do seem to have been potentially significant. Although the support of senior or "weighty" colleagues, particularly the Prime Minister, was vitally useful in achieving policy agreement at Cabinet, Blunkett's authority and the credibility of his stance were under considerable pressure. Had the PM withdrawn support, the situations would have been markedly different. According to Blunkett's biographer, "Blair had told him that he could run with the idea, but had been careful to stress that he would not give him his backing should he hit difficulties." (Pollard, 2005, p. 302). Whilst support was sustained, however, prime ministerial backing for the scheme lent greater security to the Home Secretary's stance against the opposition emanating from particular sections of the cabinet.

4. Perseverance over time and 5. Against escalating costs.

As was made clear in Chapter Four, the "means" element of intention was articulated with a high degree of continuity over the course of the identity cards policy's development. The changes that did occur involved the shift from secondary to primary legislation before compulsion could be imposed in the schemes second phase, and then later, the wholesale shift in the technological structure of the database suggested by the Home Office document (2006). From 2002 onwards, it is possible to identify a clear resolution to persist with these arrangements, even if the "ends" or the arguments for introduction were not so clearly identified. Not only was the language used clear and definitive, but following the publication of the Entitlement Card Green Paper (Home Office 2002b) there was a notable absence of alternative arrangements put forward. Even where the

consultation document discussed potential alternative sets of arrangements, including a voluntary option, there was a clear preference for a universal scheme. For example, no illustration of how a voluntary scheme might work was included in this document, whereas it was for a compulsory scheme (Hughes, Written answer, 19 Sep, 2002). The Home Secretary was also willing to signal his preference for a compulsory scheme. Most importantly, although cost estimates had been produced for a compulsory scheme, the exercise had not been carried out for a voluntary scheme.

In subsequent Home Office documents, little or no consideration was given to alternative formulations of measures for achieving the desired infrastructure, other than the development of those that were already in place.

Secondly, although a number of potential alternatives were put forward by different organisations, as a potential set of means for administering the population, there is little evidence of them being seriously considered. The most prominent of these at the time were the ONS proposals for the CIP, which were discussed earlier in this chapter. As was recalled by a government source, there seemed to be a negative perception in the Home Office towards the CIP plans. The Home Office believed the CIP plans lacked credibility, and were not to be taken too seriously. This view was echoed by a number of government sources.

> The idea of creating a citizens' information, or project database, whatever it was called, by doing all this mass data merging beforehand, and then as it were, putting a gold star next to each record as you recorded biometrics and become assured of the individual against that link was, I think, seen as a step too far. (Government source, interview, 2010)

> …it wouldn't have stood up to any rigorous public debate, had it ever been exposed to that level. (Government source, interview, 2010)

> …it wasn't thought through because, bless them, it was thought up by ONS statisticians who didn't have that political view point. (Government source, interview, 2010)

The position articulated in the quotations above serves to highlight the lack of seriousness with which the CIP was held by the Home Office. This was partly because of the particular form of the "means" suggested, and partly because the proposals came from ONS officials who were seen to lack political understanding. Together with the absence of work on the possibility of a voluntary scheme, these insights suggest a lack of serious consideration of alternative options beyond those which were initially set out in the consultation document. This is the case both in terms of alternatives within the scheme, particularly in relation to compulsion, and also to the scheme itself, with respect to the CIP. In this respect, the Home Office demonstrated clear resolve to continue with its original plans.

At Cabinet level, the then Home Secretary certainly felt a need to persist in his efforts to achieve a policy consensus on identity cards.

> I wouldn't have gone through that without having a real sense of purpose, because it knocks you for six. You are a human and you get punched and punched and punched. And then you think, I've just got to keep going. It's tenacity. What I do relish is not being defeated. (Blunkett, citied in Pollard, 2005, p. 14).

The above statement describes Mr Blunkett's perception of having to continue under difficult conditions before he was able to achieve his ambitions. Similarly, this view was shared by a number of his ministerial colleagues. Quoting a ministerial source, Pollard captures the stance taken by Blunkett of persistence in the face of adversity.

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> His persistence over ID cards was an archetypal Blunkett strategy. As a minister summarises it: "He went through a careful process of over two years and he knew exactly what he was doing – changing the terrain through dogged persistence. One White Paper after another, keeping the thing moving, taking setbacks and the delays, coming back, getting rebuffed in Cabinet committee but still going on. Other people would have said, 'I'm using up too much political capital here, I've got to back off. He didn't. He kept at it." (Pollard, 2005, p. 302)

Finally, the extracts from Blunkett's diary again show evidence of a willing to persevere, even when faced with continuing difficulties, and strong objections from Cabinet colleagues

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> But it has all been a terrible mess and there are enormous lessons to be learnt from it, including coming back hard next week, hopefully on Tuesday… (Blunkett, 2006, p. 555)

> … another stage in the almost perennial battle: bit by bit, agreement being reached; bit by bit, talking a step forward towards legislation in the autumn. (Blunkett, 2006, p. 632)

It is clear that the Home Secretary saw himself as persevering in the face of resistance, as did some of his cabinet colleagues. They also identified some of the risks the Blunkett faced as a result of this persistence, including the notion of "political capital".

Unlike the parliamentary arena, where the data required that the inference take the form of abduction, here data is much more suitable for deductive reasoning which implies that a greater degree of confidence can be placed in the conclusions. However, the source of the data presents a slightly different methodological challenge. Much of the data has been drawn from Mr Blunkett directly, either in the form of biographies, published memoirs, or interviews with the former Home Secretary. Biographies draw heavily on recollections rather than on other evidence, and so a degree of bias might exist with the propensity to

over emphasise the degree of resolution shown by the Home Secretary. Those data which are drafted from Mr Blunkett directly must also be treated with caution for the same reason. This issue is returned to in Chapter Six.

6. Self-binding

The review of the literature showed how the process of 'self-binding' can work in several different ways. It operates as (i) "self-binding" where an individual binds their own future action; (ii) being "bound by others"; and (iii) "claiming to be bound" by others actions (perhaps whilst exaggerating the real constraining effect). There is, however, little strong evidence of actual self-binding in this case study. No real collateral was at stake if the Government did not succeed, accept reputation assets, but these are nearly always engaged with policy making and the potential for U turns. The Government did not make the Bill a matter of confidence in the leadership of the party, or of the Government, neither did Blunkett threaten Cabinet with his resignation if he did not get the *Identity Cards Bill 2004* through the legislation sub-committee. The second type of "binding" is also not relevant to commitment. The third example, of being bound by others, is however relevant to this case, as numerous efforts were made in a range of documentation and in the content of ministerial speeches to link the idea of successful business links between the USA and the UK with the requirements to acquiesce to US biometric travel requirements.

Although a brief reference is made to "…international developments which are driving up the standards required to prove identity." in the White Paper (Home Office, 2003), this

argument did not appear explicitly in Home Office documentation until 2004. With the publication of the Draft Bill (Home Office, 2004), this rationale is explicitly referenced, but this was two years after its use by Mr Blunkett in Parliament. These data suggest that the Home Office was less willing that its minister make this explicit connection, and by extension, was less concerned with the process of self-binding. Indeed, there are few data to support the idea of the department binding itself to the policy of identity cards, to convince others, or to prevent the department deviating from these aims further down the line. This is because data to support or undermine this strand of the definition would have to consist in internal department correspondence of the sort that is not currently available because the events are too recent for declassification.

With the former Home Secretary, Mr Blunkett, the situation was different. Rather than altering some objective structure of incentives, the strength, frequency and timing of this strand of the rationale suggests that the former Home Secretary was attempting to alter perceptions, his own or others, about the structure of incentives, as they relate to social democracy in a globalised world. Citing the rise of a number of right wing political leaders in Western Europe, whose success has been attributed to their anti-immigration rhetoric, Blunkett continually claimed that identity cards present a viable means of addressing the concerns and fears of ordinary people in a "progressive way." (Blunkett, interview, 2010).

> I was determined that we weren't going to have this right wing backlash in Britain, and to avoid that, you needed to hear, and to reflect what people were saying, but to do it in a thought through and genuinely left of centre way, a progressive way. So, securing people's confidence, stability…. yes, their security in their own lives whether it's on the street, the changes going on in the world immediately around them… (Blunkett, interview, 2010)

Similarly, as Blunkett's biographer suggests,

> Blunkett saw ID cards as having importance beyond their practical utility. If clandestine entry and its consequences were not controlled, the far right would have a potent weapon. "Because nobody's been prepared to talk about it, so we've got to do it – now. Because in ten years' time we'll be completely behind; other countries will have introduced biometrics. (Pollard, 2005, p. 305)

Again, it is also apparent that this is the strategy he pursued when seeking to persuade other members of the Cabinet. The following extract from Blunkett's diary from May 2003 recounts the point at which he felt he had won the PM round to the idea of identity cards.

> Good news of the week for me was getting an agreement with Tony on ID cards, subject to sorting out the finance and technology. What a breakthrough. The discussion took place after a very lengthy Cabinet when we discussed the local election results in detail, and in particular the success of the British National Party. (Blunkett, 2006, p. 491)

The argument that Blunkett seems to be presenting is that by offering a means by which Government might rationalise entry into the country, and access to free public services, the use of a biometric card schemes offered a genuine tool for the battle against extremism, and for the promotion of a more cohesive society. This strand of thought can also be found in the initial Entitlement Cards Green Paper (Home Office, 2002b) as was discussed earlier in this chapter. After Blunkett left the Home Office in 2004, this aspect of the identity cards proposals almost entirely slipped from the agenda, which supports the assertion that he was an important driving force behind this argument being sustained.

However, once again, these data are drawn heavily on the Home Secretary's account of events. They need to be qualified, so that their contribution to the overall weighting of the

score on this strand of the definition is reduced in line with the lack of confidence that can be placed it the data objectivity. Given this assessment of data quality, this strand of the definition of commitment for the executive arena can only be scored as being weak.

7. Reputation

Efforts to build a reputation for commitment require that a government displays a committed stance. A committed government therefore seeks to robustly demonstrate its intention, its capacity, and its reputation for resolution (Tang, 2005). Within the executive arena, the Government sought to demonstrate the robustness of its claims to particular intentions in a number of different ways.

Government efforts to demonstrate its intentions were discussed at the beginning of this chapter where the analysis showed a strong degree of continuity towards "means", and sharp discontinuity towards "ends". Similarly, this degree of continuity towards "means" suggested a strong degree of commitment, echoing the situation in the parliamentary arena. Each was scored as "strong" or "moderate" according to the scheme set out in the methodology chapter. In contrast, the emphasis the Home Office and Government gave to the different aspirations for the scheme shifted considerably over the course of the policy development process. Moreover they did not do so in a way that was consistent with the shifts observed in the parliamentary arena.

The issue of capacity has also been discussed in relation to the executive arena in the context of the Government's attempts to build capacity, or to exercise capacity. However,

the data show that the Home Office had particular problems demonstrating capacity because of some past difficulties with large IT project delivery, as the analysis of the parliamentary arena has shown. Moreover, as a government source makes clear, similar concerns were voiced in the executive arena. Specifically, staff in the Prime Minister's Office (No. 10) had significant concerns about the Home Office's capability to deliver the policy.

> "I don't think they trusted the Home Office to deliver on time. I think they were worried that the approach to it was almost too slow… (Government source, interview, 2010)

> …largely it was down to deliverability, that the costs go out of control, and therefore the pressures on other bits of Home Office funding… because the Treasury wouldn't give extra money for it, so I think most of their concerns were really around that. (Government source, interview, 2010).

The intractability of the Treasury on the issue of funding the card scheme made deliverability a particular concern for No. 10. Because cost overruns for the identity cards scheme would have impacted on other areas of Home Office expenditure such as police or prisons, the Home Office's capacity to deliver the scheme was a pressing political issue.

As was noted in the chapter on the parliamentary arena, on various occasions, Home Office ministers sought to appeal to successes in the department's recent past, particularly with the UKPS customer service record and the implementation of the new passport issuing system. Data on this aspect of executive interaction are limited. Much of the most useful documentation, in the form of officials' advice and representations to ministers and to No. 10, is covered by the "thirty year rule". What can be drawn from these limited data is that some amount of the Home Office's response to No.10's concerns again pointed to

previous success with the UKPS. According to a Government source, this stance was genuinely ingrained in Home Office thinking. The argument asserted that,

> Actually, passports were getting an increasingly good reputation, having had the '98 problems. The new developments had gone in quite well. A few years later, they had a good PAC report on biometric passport implementation which helped as well. (Government source, interview, 2010)

On this reading of limited data, the Home Office faced similar concerns from both parliamentarians, and from officials and special advisors at No. 10. It is also possible that these concerns were felt more widely throughout the civil service, but it is not possible to infer this from these data. What can be asserted with some confidence, however, is that part of the Home Office's response echoed that which was presented in the parliamentary arena. The Home Office and its ministers sought to counter these specific concerns about its capacity to deliver the project successfully, by attempting to build reputation for capacity to deliver large scale ITC projects by pointing to past success. Limited data, however, make it difficult to form a judgement about the degree to which the Home Office sought to "build capacity". Nevertheless, the ubiquity of the "passport delivery" example of Home Office documentation, and interview data suggest that this point was repeatedly made throughout the policy development process.

Finally, the issue of building reputation for resolution in the executive is in need of addressing. Under the chapter sub-headings of (4) perseverance and (5) escalating costs, we saw how the Home Secretary behaved resolutely, as he sought to push plans for the identity cards scheme through a sceptical Cabinet. Once again, few data for this element of resolve are available describing departmental level interactions. Much of this would no

doubt be found in correspondence and other materials which are still unavailable, under the thirty year rule.

8. Thought style

This limb captures the propensity of committed actors to treating sunk costs as not sunk, and be willing to engage in further action to justify past action.

This chapter has shown that in the executive arena, ministers were willing to mobilise resources to achieve ends under conditions of risk. This conclusion was reached by inferring from their behaviours in specific contexts. In addition, the concept suggests that committed actors might have a propensity to treat their sunk costs as not sunk. They will regard their having already sunk costs as a *reason* for persevering, thereby encouraging them to become more committed over time, to recoup the value of their initial resource investment. Unlike other strands of the definition, this aspect of commitment is not a type of behaviour, but rather a rationale for a type of behaviour. Data appealed to as evidence of a thought-style are therefore of a different nature. On this strand of the definition, we are also be interested in the subjective, unconscious and non-deliberate manifestations (if evidence is available about them) of how actors weighed the costs associated with their commitment, and having experienced resistance, how they then seek to justify their continued involvement.

In the previous chapter, the data failed to show any evidence that a committed "thought style" was exhibited by the Labour government, in its statements in Parliament. There

was little indication that the Government had on some non-deliberate level, sought to justify further expenditure of assets on the basis of making good on an investment of resources. However, there were good reasons to suspect that the available data were inadequate for the purpose, so a judgement on the theoretical utility of 'thought-style' was suspended until a full assessment could be made of the data across both of the arenas.

In certain respects, it is clear that throughout 2002-03, the former Home Secretary, Mr Blunkett was not prepared to write-off the political costs of pushing forward the identity cards policy, even when faced with challenges to his authority from senior people within Cabinet. Contemporary accounts from Blunkett's published diary give a strong sense of an individual who thinks that pushing forward on gains that have already been made will help to secure their ambitions.

> I have just got to win over sufficient Cabinet colleagues to keep up the momentum and carry the day. (Blunkett, 2005, p.522)

> I am going to do a slide presentation at the Domestic Affairs Committee on Wednesday 5 November, than I hope to take it to Cabinet on Thursday and make a statement to the House the week after. I just hope I can get it cleared in time and force it through. It is really important politically now, both for Tony and myself. (Blunkett, 2005, pp. 552-553).

These two statements are illuminating in a number of ways. The first shows Blunkett's regognition of the need for political support in order to bolster his position. Securing this support would ensure the continuation of the momentum behind his identity cards proposals that he had managed to build up over the previous few months. More importantly, it also shows a particular thought style which emphasised additional resource expenditure (winning over sufficient cabinet colleagues) to maximise the value of the gains already made (a sense of momentum). The clear rationale behind expending

additional resources to gather further support is to make good on an initial investment that had not until this point been sufficient to achieve his ends of reaching policy agreement.

The second of these extracts also points to the same type of thought style, where sunk costs are not seen as sunk. In this example, the emphasis is on the political costs to both the former Home Secretary, and to the Prime Minister who lent his authority to the Home Secretary's position. Further efforts are once more required to ensure policy clearance because so much political capital, presumably in the form of time, energy, and authority, has already been invested. Further mobilisation of such resources is required to ensure that the initial investment is made good. Elsewhere, Blunkett goes as far as to explain his motivation for adopting this position.

> My self-criticism is that I never liked loosing, ever, because I cared. I mean, I was pig headed as well, it's a duel thing, I was pig headed, and in that sense, arrogant, but I also cared deeply. (Blunkett, interview, 2010)

> And then you think, I've just got to keep going. It's tenacity. What I do relish is not being defeated (Blunkett cited in Pollard, 2005, p. 14).

The former Home Secretary suggests that rather than being driven predominantly by a desire for success, it was a desire not to lose which was most important. More precisely, success comes through not losing. In the prospect theory terminology that was discussed earlier in this thesis it seems that for Blunkett, "losses loom larger than gains" (Glen, 1993). Additional costs are justified because "not being defeated" (Blunkett, interview, 20010) is seen as important. This is to say that a desire not to lose is the only principle driving the Home Secretary to invest additional resources. To assert this point would be a crude caricature of what is a highly complex thought process. It does, however, offer

some justification for the continued inclusion of this strand of the definition of commitment within the overall framework adopted in this thesis.

A second point is worth making about "thought style" in this arena. The previous chapter raised the issue of the way that Home Office ministers sought to represent the costs associated with the identity cards scheme. The additional costs of setting up an identity cards system were justified on the basis of maximising the return on the initial financial investment in new passport technology. A similar line of reasoning is also pursued in the executive arena. For example, the development of biometric passports means that the infrastructure costs would "be incurred anyway" but without the "transparency" offered by the identity cards legislation (Home Office, 2003, p. 10). However, Home Office documentation is less clear about the link between sunk costs and additional investment in identity cards to maximise benefits. Other reasons are suggested including a need for "…clear lines of political and operational authority…" as well as "…the need to respond to international developments." (Home Office, 2004d, p. 5).

One government source avoided making an economic argument at all, and described the link between passports and identity cards as simply the most sensible thing to do.

> We've already got biometrics on passports, we've got chips with facial images, and it would be very odd to have an identity card that was less secure, and had less identification features that passports…. so if we're putting fingerprints on our passports, it makes sense to have that on the ID card. (Interview, 2010, p. 14)

In contrast, therefore, to the lack of data in the parliamentary arena, the executive offered much stronger support for the assertion that a committed actor would seek to justify further costs on the basis of those cost that have already been accrued. As was noted,

however, the source of these data being published memoirs and individual recollection by the actors themselves in interview means that it must be reweighted accordingly, to account for any potential bias. Therefore, despite strong evidence for thought style, this strand of the definition achieved a moderate score in this arena.

Conclusion

The analysis undertaken in the chapter offers a second chance to assess the utility of the definition of political commitment that has been offered by this thesis. It presents an opportunity to extend the understanding of the concept through an assessment of the eight strands of the definition in a different context, as well as additional data from comparisons across arenas. As was the case in the previous chapter, when relevant data were compared against the criteria offered in Chapter Three, we can see how each of the dimensions of commitment performed in the executive arena. The tabulation of these results then provides a foundation for convenient and succinct comparisons across arenas.

The analysis conducted in this arena showed that the Government was prepared to demonstrate its intention in a clear, unequivocal and consistent way towards a particular set of "means", for much of the time period which falls within this case study. The means that were most strongly emphasised included the intention for the scheme to be comprised of a central register, designated documents, compulsion to register and an emphasis on data sharing across government. Similarly, a broad degree of consensus was observable in the Government's representations of its intention towards the policy "ends" or justifications for introduction of the card scheme. The same category codes outlined in

Chapter Three were applied under the same conditions as in the parliamentary arena, and broadly, very similar results were found. Most important to the Home Office were the issues of illegal immigration, which was once again linked very closely in the rhetoric with illegal working, and also identity fraud. Both of these issues score highly on the representation of intention indicator for large portions of the policy process under consideration in this thesis. Just behind these issues were national security concerns, which were moderately represented, but once more, this was in a highly consistent way. Where the primary differences between arenas could be seen in relation to the consistency with which particular "ends" were represented. The executive arena seemed to be more stable in this regard, offering more consistency in its position. Overall, the representations of intention toward particular "ends" were more consistent and stronger in the executive arena, when compared with the parliamentary arena. This relative consistency, together with the consistency over intention towards means dictates that "intention" as a necessary strand of a conceptual framework, in the executive arena, is scored as "strong".

With respect to "capacity", the available data suggested that much greater efforts were given to the important process of building capacity in the executive, than was evident in the parliamentary arena. The data also suggested that building alliances and a base of agreement in the executive arena tended to be located at ministerial rather than departmental level. The process of mobilising capacity was not so constrained, with evidence suggesting the mobilisation of institutional capacity to dictate terms of discussion between the Home Office and external agencies. Clear evidence of both building and capacity and exercising control over resources suggests a score of "strong" on this dimension of the definition, in the executive arena.

Data from this arena also suggested that it was Home Office ministers who were most prepared to engage in the activity of putting their assets at hazard, including direct confrontation with other senior colleagues, persisting with a minority position, and overly relying on the authority of the Prime Minister in the face of substantial opposition, to achieve objectives. Data for this strand of the definition allowed an inference to be made about a situation of risk, and the necessity of mobilising resources. The robustness of this inference must, however, be closely examined, because we are still left with a significant inferential gap between the specific types of data available, and the conclusion that assets were at hazard. With an awareness of this potential weakness in the analysis, we are still able to draw moderately assured conclusions because of the range of data appealed to. In favour of this assessment are interview data relating to the subjective perception of the key policy makers involved with this process, including former ministers and officials, as well as ministerial memoires. This is aided, to some extent by the ministerial correspondence which was leaked to the press, the authenticity of which is attested to by those involved with the policy development. With these potential constraints in mind, the data suggest a score of "moderate" on this strand of the definition.

Government's willingness to persevere over time and to accept the escalation of costs associated with its commitment in this arena, found expression in both ministerial and departmental activity in this arena. Once policy agreement had been reached, the Government as a whole was willing to persevere with this policy in a fairly consistent way, until December 2006. This fact is made more compelling when considered in relation to the seeming lack of willingness to engage with alternative courses of action. Data suggest that the Home Office was convinced by the particular set of means that were arrived at very early on in the process, and that little considerations were given to

alternatives within the programme. In addition, data from this arena also show that the Home Office was less than willing to offer serious consideration to alternative ways of registering the population, suggesting a lack of co-ordination between programmes. The subjective perceptions of key actors also lend weight to this argument for the period until the Identity Cards Bill (2004) was laid before Parliament. Moreover, data discussed later under "thought-style", also suggest that, for Mr Blunkett at least, the costs being sunk as a result of this perseverance in the face of adversity were not treated as being sunk. Instead, they were conceived as investments which could be made good, given additional expenditure. The constant costs implied by continuing to commit were therefore escalating over time because of individual subjective perceptions about sunk costs not being sunk. Given these facts, these strands of the definition attain a "moderate" score in this arena.

To some extent, the executive arena saw some repetition of the possible self-binding type behaviour that was identified in the parliamentary arena, whereby the appearance of constraints being imposed by an ally (the USA) were argued to be so close to British interests that they worked effectively as a self-binding mechanism used by the British government as well. However, data from the executive arena slightly augment this understanding. It shows that, although this argument was favoured by ministers, it was perhaps not quite held to the same extent by government officials. This group were less convinced that the external binding was especially strong, tending instead to emphasise more routine and administrative, and less political types of rationale. Although it does not fully undermine, it certainly qualifies the reading of external binding to US immigration standards as a mechanism for ensuring continued commitment at departmental level. However, ministers' willingness to use the argument was a form of self-binding.

Nevertheless, the disparity in the emphasis given to this rationale between levels of government weakens the confidence that can be placed in any inferences draw from these types of data.

Data on "reputation" were drawn from three different areas. These were Government's reputation for intention, its reputation for capacity and reputation for resolution. On the first, the consistency and robustness of the manner in which government sought to represent its intention towards the identity cards policy was taken into account. A high degree of consistency with a strongly argued case was made for a specific set of policy instruments, until December 2006. Over this period, therefore, the means element of intention scores highly. Similarly, although Government was less consistent than with the "means", its representation of the policy "ends" it wished to achieve through the introduction of an identity cards were relatively coherent. Although some change in emphasis was identifiable, the relative consistency suggests that a score of "moderate" should be applied to this element of intention. As a whole, intention in this arena achieves a score of "moderate". Similarly, we encountered efforts by the Home Office to highlight its capacity to deliver large scale ICT projects. However, although these efforts were consistently made, they were at no point a central element of the Home Office's position. They therefore receive only a "weak" score on this strand of the definition.

Finally, the analysis also revealed evidence of a Home Secretary who clearly demonstrated strong resolve by persisting over time and in the face of what he perceived as escalating costs, as he sought to achieve policy agreement at Cabinet level. What data there are on this aspect of the definition are compelling. However, this only represents one episode, from the end of 2001 until the end of 2003, when this analysis is interested

in a much large process of the Government's commitment to an identity cards policy. There is strong evidence for a reputation for resolution during the initial period of this policy's development from the Home Secretary. This is not a sufficient basis from which to infer a "strong" score on this strand of resolve because of too few data. On the other hand, however, we do have data which suggest that one the policy had reached the stage of attempting to gain parliamentary approval, then the other departments were much more willing to offer help and support to achieve so that "Government" was not defeated. This offers a reason to give a little more weight to the data relating to Blunkett, for this strand of "reputation" as a whole. Once more, additional data are required before a more definitive judgement can be offered. On the basis of what is available, however, demonstrations of resolution achieve a score of moderate. Collating the scores for representation of intention (moderate), representation for capacity (weak), and reputation for resolve (moderate), gives a judgement based score of moderate for this strand of the definition of commitment overall.

The summative scores for each limb of the definition are set out in table 5.2 below.

Table 5.2. Summative scores for strength of commitment on each limb of the definition

	Necessary conditions					Strategies		Indicator
Limb of definition	(1) Intention	(2) Capacity	(3) Assets	(4) Perseverance	(5) Escalation	(6) Self-binding	(7) Reputation	(8) Thought-style
Presence & strength of evidence	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate

Because the Government scored on all necessary elements of commitment, on the basis of this analysis, the Government demonstrated clear commitment to the identity cards policy in the executive arena. Moreover, elements within the Government offered some clear signs of self-binding behaviour, as well as some binding through others. There is also evidence for the Government seeking to build its reputation for commitment, and some evidence of adopting a committed thought-style.

The following chapter offers a synthesis of these and Chapter Four's data output tables, and offers some interpretations on the significance for government commitment, taken summarily across both arenas.

Chapter 6 - Comparison, integration and synthesis of empirical chapters. Methodological reflection on the process of concept formation and statement of limitations

This thesis has presented a new eight limbed definition of political commitment. The concept has been operationalised, and measures have been devised for each of the different limbs. Its performance has been examined in the empirical context of two key political arenas of British politics, and the commitment of the former Labour Government to an identity cards policy has been mapped, measured and assessed.

This chapter will draw conclusions from the process of the empirical testing of the concept of commitment, to show the significance of the findings for both the immediate research question as well as for the wider aims of political science more generally. Specifically, the aims of this chapter are as follows:

- To draw conclusions about *method,* specifically the definition's tractability in operationalisation, for the types of data available from British government.

- To draw *methodological* conclusions about the performance of the definition of political commitment from the examination to which it has been subjected.

- To draw substantive *empirical* conclusions about the development of commitment to the identity card policy, its overall strength, and about differences in these respects in commitment between the two arenas examined.

- To identify the consequences of the argument for *future research*, with regards to both (i) political commitment generally, and (ii) the Labour Government's identity cards programme.

In doing so, the chapter offers reflections on the overall success of the methodological strategy employed, pointing out those areas where the strategy afforded the analysis the greatest confidence, as well as those areas where the required inferential leaps between data and conclusions were largest. In reflecting these observations, the chapter makes clear the degree of certainty with which empirical and theoretical conclusions could be drawn from the data to conclusions. It draws attention to the limitations of the types of data available, the question of missing data, and discusses how these issues were managed. This chapter utilises the insights offered by this thesis so far, to present an overall assessment of the political commitment of the Labour Government to its identity cards policy. This process is intrinsically liked with the success of the methodological strategy that has been employed. The chapter therefore also offers an evaluation of the robustness of the conceptual framework, the operationalisation and measurement strategy, and the data level analysis. Finally, the chapter offers some reflections on the significance of differences in the way that commitment was expressed between arenas.

To restate the central issue, the rationale for the thesis is based on the recognition that political science lacks, and indeed needs, a well formed concept of commitment. This issue is of some significance for a number of reasons. A well-formed concept is needed if we wish to offer codes, scales and measures of government initiatives by strength of commitment, and by the clarity of the intentions. Secondly, such a concept is required for undertaking comparative analysis of commitment among different government policies and initiatives, and perhaps also cross-nationally among different governments. Thirdly, and more generally, robust concepts must be placed at the foundation of explanatory studies (Collier and Gerring, 2009; Goertz, 2005). The process of concept formation is therefore an essential step before explanatory hypotheses can be developed for each of the different limbs, and tests carried out through the use of an appropriate research design strategy.

Because of the lack of attention paid to commitment in political science, an argument for conceptualisation was drawn from a close reading, and a synthesis, of the ways that commitment was used in empirical and theoretical literatures from across the social sciences. The following section of this chapter presents an assessment of the coherence and success of this undertaking, by drawing methodological conclusions about the process of operationalising the concept for measurement in the two arenas.

Assessment of the operationalisability of the framework for understanding commitment

Briefly, the concept offered in this thesis is comprised of eight separate but interrelated limbs. These are (1) *intention*; (2) *capacity*; and (3) a willingness to put *assets at hazard*; coupled with the behaviour of (4) *persevering* over time, in the face of (5) *escalating costs*. It is exhibited by actors (6) *self-binding* to commitment claims, or through building their (7) *reputation* for commitment. Finally, an indicator of commitment is the adoption of (8) a *thought style*, which refuses to treat sunk costs as sunk.

1. *Intention* was the first element of the definition of commitment put forward in the thesis. This strand of the framework posits that "intention" is a necessary component of being committed, and captures the idea that commitment must ultimately be an activity which is purposefully undertaken. It was operationalised by identifying evidence for intention through a government's demonstrations of plans about future behaviour with respect to (i) the timing of the statement (to show the development of the clarity, the consistency and the strength of the intentions over time), (ii) the strength with which they were expressed, and (iii) the "object" of these statements, with respect both to "ends" pursued and "means" deployed. The first of these elements was addressed by creating a chronology of events. The second was addressed with the use of thresholds for attributing ordinal scores of strength of intention. Ordinal scores are by their nature mutually exclusive and ranked, and so allowed the analysis to distinguish between data, suggesting more or less of a phenomenon. This strategy was used to code for the element of "intention" which related to policy "ends". Thirdly descriptive categorical codes were utilised to establish discrete categories or sets of a phenomena, but without any ranking. These purely descriptive category codes were applied to the coding of "means".

The empirical exercise in Chapters Four and Five showed that the strand of the definition for "intention" was actually relatively straightforward to operationalise and to find suitable measures for. The production of a chronology was crucial to the research. By virtue of the limbs of the definition which provide for "perseverance" and "escalating costs", it is clear that commitment is a phenomenon which implies duration over time. By contrast the limbs of "intention", "capacity" and "assets at hazard" have no intrinsic long duration, in the absence of perseverance and cost escalation. The chronology therefore provided the mechanism for linking together the Government's demonstrations of intent, so that changes in its strength and character could be systematically mapped over time, through additional analyses.

The process of the creation of a chronology required the collation of dates, and ordering of descriptions of events into extensive tables. These included chronologies of the publication of relevant government documents, of parliamentary debates, select committee hearings and reports etc., detailing the key contributors and making a careful descriptive analysis of content. The variety of data sources available for this task was beneficial to the analysis because it allowed for a more fine grained measurement of change over time. Quantity of sources was also beneficial in that it presented the opportunity for the corroboration of specific items of information through more than one source. Because of this large quantity of data, greater confidence is afforded to those statements about change over time, because of the shortening of the inferential step this implies between data and conclusions.

Some limits to these data were also identified. Most significantly, gaps in this chronology did exist, but these were mostly only relevant for small periods throughout the policy process. This was because either the parliamentary timetable had moved on, or because the Home Office was not publishing policy documents at these stages. In addition, the process of making inferences from these data to conclusions is not simply "additive", and so some missing data could be tolerated. This issue will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Perhaps more significantly, chronological data were missing at different levels of analysis. For example, although demonstrations of intention at departmental level were relatively numerous and easily bounded for the purpose of coding, the same was not true at the level of individual ministers. These had to be inferred instead from departmental activity. Here missing data limited certain elements of the analysis. These problems are not however very serious for the purpose of constructing a detailed chronology for making inferences about government intention, they simply require that an additional degree of caution is added to the statements which are made as a result of this process.

Categorical measures were used to distinguish between demonstrations of the "object' of intention, or what it was specifically at any given point in time that government was intending to achieve. Ordinal measures were used to distinguish preferences between options by making careful judgements about the tone of the language used. Both were designed to measure the strength of intention. However, whereas ordinal measures are inherently ranked, an assessment of strength of intention based on categorical measures was inferred through consistency of statement. The application of these measures was also a straightforward exercise. Setting aside missing data issues - which will be dealt with later - the creation of a chronology of events, could be read-off directly from many

of the data. Similarly, having established a set of criteria for categorical measures and thresholds for ordinal measures, the application of these coding schemes did not present substantial difficulties because of the nature of the strand of the definition being worked with. The application of these measures meant that both the object of commitment (the "means" and "ends", or what was being committed to, and the rationales for commitment) could be relatively clearly identified. Either the data reflected a particular argument being made at a given point in time, or else they did not. Attributing an ordinal value to arguments was a slightly greater inferential challenge, but the specification of clear thresholds removes the need for more impressionistic coding, and once again, clearly bounds the concepts under analysis. The inferential distance between data and judgement about value was not, therefore, insurmountable.

The strategy for operationalising and measuring intention has further strengths. The clear specification of coding procedures or the creation of coding "start lists" also improves the replicablility of the research process, and goes some way to countering one of the more obvious critiques often levelled at the reliability of qualitative data analysis techniques (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 58). In addition, rather than scores for each element being attributed on the basis of an aggregation of individual items of coded data, scores were attributed on the basis of a judgement which weighted evidence in context. This preserves much of the advantage of a more deductive, theory driven coding strategy whilst allowing for the contextual sensitivity and richness of more traditional "bottom up" qualitative data analysis techniques.

2. *Capacity* was posited as the second necessary element of commitment, and captures an actor's ability to commit to a course of action. Key to this strand of the definition were

the sorts of "hard" and "soft" resources available to government or other political actors to allow them to seek to achieve ends, as well as the relationships that were entered into so that these resources could be mobilised effectively. Operationalisation of this element of commitment involved the specification and the coding for "soft" and "hard" resources, and the relationships to which they related. For example, codes were used to distinguish between the use of soft capacity to secure consent from backbench MPs and peers, and hard capacity of accrual of skilled personnel in the executive. The extract offered below shows the application of this coding scheme. The passage was coded as an example of the use of soft resources within the same arena at a political level to persuade those with the *de jure authority* to veto government decisions. The context of the debate was a Lords' amendments which sought to break the link between the application for passports and enrolment on the identity cards register.

In the extract below, the principal means of leverage is the use of persuasion through entreating and appealing to the notion of the "right thing to do". The language used by the Minister is assuaging, rather than confrontational and bombastic, as is often the case in the House of Commons, and the passage is peppered with terms and phrases such as "respectfully", "grace", and "…it would be proper and in the tradition of the House…". Attempts are made to point out a contradiction between a position voiced by the Conservative Minister Lord Strathclyde, and the behaviour of Conservative Peers in insisting on this amendment, but even this is presented in a way in which the criticism is dispersed rather than focused. The use of the personal subjective pronoun "we" reinforces this dispersal of criticism by including the person who made the statement.

> … there comes a moment when we have to bow to the other place. I would respectfully suggest that we would honour the function of this House better if we did that with a degree of grace. I simply ask, therefore, that your Lordships

consider whether it would be proper and in the tradition of this House to go
further. I remember with great clarity what was said by the noble Lord, Lord
Strathclyde…. "At the end of the day the House of Commons will have it's say".
It has spoken. It has spoken loudly. Its voice is rising, and I do not think that we
need a cacophony to tell us that the time has now arrived. Therefore, I move that
your Lordships' House should not insist on Amendments Nos. 16 and 22 9.
(Baroness Scotland, Lords Deb. 15 Mar 2006, col. 1224)

Unfortunately for the Government, the Baroness' efforts were wasted on this occasion, as

the Lords voted for the amendment, and returned the *Identity Cards Bill 2005* to the

Commons for further consideration. The point is that, like the coding scheme for

"intention", the process necessitates not only a close reading of the data, but also a

judgement-based approach which draws on large bodies of data at a time. In the Lords set

out above, not only is the tone of language relevant, but the fact of this item of data's

temporal location must also be included in the judgement of its significance. This is only

the second of what was to be a series of four occasions on which this issue was debated

directly in the Lords. Those efforts to mobilise "soft" resources which were further along

this process were given greater significance because of the process of accrual of resources

over time. This contextually sensitive coding process is clearly much more complex than

a more simple aggregation of score or a frequency count of the occurrence of words in

documents. This complexity, however, allowed the analysis to be much richer.

The experience of coding for resources highlighted how different types of resources

behave slightly differently. On some limbs of the definition certain resources accrue over

the period of perseverance. By contrast, a number of other types of resources were

depleted. For example, reputation for being committed might grow as a government fights

its way through a bill against its backbench rebels without giving grounds on issues that

are central to its programme. By contrast, in doing so, a government's political capital

(e.g. authority, credibility) in the form of backbench respect and possibly also loyalty for

their government and their party leadership might be depleted. This was the experience of the Blair Government with particularly controversial legislation such as the Higher Education Act (2004), and of the Thatcher Government with the Community Charge. However, in the case of the identity cards measure, the data suggests that reputation for resolve did accrue to some degree, particularly with respect to the perceptions of crossbench peers, and possibly also Labour backbenchers. However, backbench's loyalty did not deplete at a rate which made this process of persevering difficult to sustain. On the contrary, by the end of the period, the Government was not in a great deal of difficulty. As was discussed in Chapter Two, Hood (1983) makes a similar observation in his discussion of "contingently" and "immanently" depletable resources (pp. 141-142), but he does not account for their being mobilised simultaneously, and says nothing of their interaction with each other. The insight of this thesis in clearly highlighting this issue offers an area for future work in measuring the relationship between accruing and depleting resources. This will be important in research which seeks to explain the sustainability of commitment, and for understanding the risks and consequences of political commitment to controversial policy initiatives.

Some of the resources under "capacity" were easier to code than others. Time for example is by its nature quantifiable using cardinal measures, but efforts to use time as a resource can only be measured ordinally. Other types of resources included authority and legitimacy, both of which were coded for. Categorical codes were again applied carefully to large bodies of context-dependent data, such as particular periods of interaction between actors in Parliament. Where these sets of data became very large (such as the nature of a relationship over the whole of the time period of interest), then the inferential gap between the data and the statement in question increased correspondingly. However,

as with the case of the limb of the definition concerning intention, applying these category codes was relatively straightforward, so that the analysis of patterns among the categorical codes for resource mobilisation did not require a great inferential leap.

(3) *Assets at hazard* captured the inherent risk to political actors that must accompany being committed. This was identified as a necessary element of the core definition of commitment, as without the willingness to accept a degree of risk, an actor cannot be described as being committed. The operational procedure included the specification and the identification of those periods when particular government actors would be required to mobilise their resources under conditions of risk. These risks come in the form of either a failure to achieve the objective for which the resources were mobilised, and/or the associated opportunity costs of the exercise.

The experience with "intention" and "capacity" was similar to the "assets at hazard" strand of the definition. Codes were not applied separately to discrete items of data. Producing judgements of hazard necessitated weighing all of the evidence, once again, in context. The hazards that were relevant were those which applied to the whole of government, and so it was not possible to directly read a score for an indicator of risk to assets from a specific data item, even if that item was in the form of a large body of coded text capturing a prolonged exchange between actors. To illustrate this point in the context of assets, take the example of an interaction between cabinet members with respect to an issue on which they do not agree. This would not on its own provide an adequate basis for attributing a score of high risk for this limb of the definition. This is regardless of how fractious an exchange might have become, and what types of "soft" political resources might be required to achieve ones ends, possibly at the expense of the other cabinet

minister. It would contribute to the overall judgement, but that judgement would only be made on the basis of a reading of the broader risks associated with such an exchange, and this can only be assessed when the data is understood in the wider governmental context. Specific instances of actors putting their assets at hazard only account for one part of a range of data from which a summative judgement is made for this strand of the definition across the whole arena. This required that assessments were made both from specific items of data, and the context in which they were embedded. This procedure occurred across all levels of analysis. For example, the willingness of particular ministers to expose themselves to risk by putting their political assets at hazard in cabinet to achieve a desired outcome is significant to the discussion only insofar as these hazards translated into risks for the government as a whole, perhaps in the form of a cabinet split. This is because it is *government* commitment that it being assessed. Although the commitment of individual ministers is highly relevant, on its own, this is not the level of analysis that concerns this thesis. Inferences must, therefore, be made from the individual level, to take into account the whole of government. This presents a methodological challenge of a much greater order than the application of categorical codes to specific strips of data. The necessary shift required by inferring from particular instances or situations faced by individuals, to statements about meaning for government as a whole, requires a large inferential step.

Because broad types or categories of hazard could be identified beforehand, the process of applying these insights to the data was not terribly complex. However, making an assessment of the degree of risk posed by a particular situation to the government as a whole was made on the basis of a weighed judgement of a reading across all of the data.

4. *Perseverance over time* and (5) *against escalating costs*, were also necessary conditions of the core definition. Rather than semantic conditions of the definition, these elements were behaviours that a committed actor would demonstrate. Like assets at hazard, both capture the notion of commitment involving some risk, but these extend our understanding and articulate how commitment is a process phenomenon which necessarily occurs overtime.

The operationalisation of "perseverance over time" was measured on the basis of a set of assumptions about the types of costs that might be important to a government, and that despite accruing these costs, government would continue with the activity which brought them about. Similarly, "escalation of costs" was based on the same assumptions about the accrual of costs which government felt was damaging. Observations on this limb were designed to assess the extent to which these sorts of costs were growing in number, in frequency, or by degree.

Both of these limbs of the definition were on-going matters across the whole of the study, and so once more, the analysis was required to take in data from across the case. It used this as the basis of an integrated judgement based account of the degree of commitment on these strands of the definition.

Although the analysis of the two limbs was conducted over the whole case, this is still very much a clearly bounded context. This meant that the shift required in inference drawn from the data to produce statements about specific periods of time, was similar to that required for the other elements of the definition. This is why the case being bounded was so important for the analysis. Without the case being temporally bounded by

specification of time period, and spatially bounded by specification of arena, the types of judgement based coding become much more problematic. This is for the simple reason that without 'boundedness' the information that is relevant to the process of making these judgements is potentially endless. Delineation of the boundaries beyond which the analysis would not venture made the process of judgement based coding much more straightforward.

6. *Self-binding*, and 7. *Reputation,* were not put forward as core elements of the definition of commitment. Rather, they were suggested by the literature as part of the framework because they related to how particular examples of political commitment might be exhibited. As such, they flowed from the core definition, rather than occupying a central part of that definition. For "reputation", individual strips of data on government behaviour were coded, but rather than offering an additive account of government commitment, they were once again, coded in context. Similarly, the analysis of the data in line with the operational strategy suggested for "self-binding" sought to code specific items of strips of data, but each had to be interpreted within the context of the wider politics of the arena.

8. *Thought style*, was offered as an indicator of commitment, and was the last strand of the definition. The success of the strand of the framework contrasted quite sharply between the two arenas. However, much of this can be accounted for by the types of data available, rather than issues associated with the arena itself, or with the framework. Again, the process of applying the operational strategy necessitated an approach that produced an analysis from which interpretive inferences about individuals' subjective thought-worlds were produced. As has been discussed, the ease with which one can move

from the analysis at the level of the individual to the collective actor in relation to theoretical constructs such as thought -style is far from clear.

Finally, because commitment is a process which occurs over time, the analysis in this thesis has shown that the different strands of the definition are inherently comparable. The position of particular actors, including specific government departments can be compared at different points in time, as well as across the different arenas. For example, the analysis showed that the development of the degree to which assets were put at hazard by the Home Secretary between 2001 and late 2003 increased over time. Similarly, a comparison can be offered between the object of the Home Office's intention between the period towards the middle of 2002, and the point at 2006 when plans for the design of the central register changed. This is one of the great strengths of this framework.

The issue of missing data and its implications for drawing inferences from existing sources

In addition to their being some issues relating to the operationalisation of this framework, this understanding of commitment, like almost all empirical research, is faced with the challenge of missing data. The issue of missing data is significant as it impacts on the capacity to draw warranted inferences from the data that is available, to the sorts of descriptive and interpretive statements about the phenomenon of interest which are the product of this research (6 and Bellamy, 2011). To a certain extent, the greater the body of both relevant and quality data, the clearer the empirical picture that can be built up is, as we are required to say less about what cannot be directly observed, and so are less reliant on inference. A clearer description of a phenomenon allows for greater confidence

to be placed in those inferences which do seek to take the analysis beyond the observable. Missing data, however, limits this process.

Missing data from this case came in several different forms. Firstly, some data simply did not exist. This included data which would address the issue of government department's collective perceptions of the "sunkness" of certain resources. A second category of data that is not available is that which did exist, but which is only obtainable after the thirty year rule. Again, this is an issue that is pertinent for any political science research that is interested in more contemporary historical events, and so there is no special reason why this issue should be fatal to the success of the framework. However, such data that would have been useful includes confidential advice, possible in the form of email correspondence (if it transpires that these data are to be archived) memos, and briefing reports from civil servants to ministers. Much could be learned from these sorts of interaction. In particular, the sorts of constraints and imperatives to action which might have flowed from policy makers' reading of the politics of this situation would have been much more amenable to analyse in the presence of these types of data. These sorts of data would have been useful right across the definition. They would have informed the understanding of the process of the development of "intention". They might also have offered a source of more subjective accounts, but from a time period much closer to that under analysis than interview data. This would cast light on ministers' and departmental officials' perceptions of sunk costs and whether these where allowed to impact on future mobilisation decision.

Another area where these types of data would have been useful is with respect to correspondence between officials. This might have offered insight into the bureaucratic

politics of identity cards between departments. Specifically, the issue of how these factors shaped Home Office (1) intention, (2) capacity, and created the context in which (3) assets had to be put at hazard so that ends could be achieved, could have been better accessed through these types of data. Again, the lack of such data is not terminal to the analysis as a whole, but is does suggest a diminution of the confidence that can be placed in the inferences drawn from what data is available. A Freedom of Information (FOI) would not have been useful in obtaining these types documents, because they fall within the category of "advice to ministers" and are therefore exempt from disclosure in the public interest. As discussed in Chapter Three, these kinds of material can only be obtained after de-classification under the thirty year rule.

Issues of data access do not mean that the subject of contemporary political commitment cannot be successfully measured until after the thirty year rule. On the contrary, the coding of retrospective interview data, political biographies, the parliamentary Hansard record, green and white papers, and other publically available materials produced by the Government and others, offers a reasonably clear picture into the issue of the Government's commitment to the identity cards policy. The evidence presented in this thesis in the form of the two empirical chapters, and the output of the comparative tables is offered to support this claim. Issues of missing data are a fact for contemporary political science which must be addressed in all such research. Providing that the problems they present are not insurmountable, they are not an adequate basis for making an argument against choosing a contemporary subject matter. This is not to say that the answers offered in this thesis are definitive. On the contrary, it could well be the case that new evidence comes to light that suggests their revision at a future point. However, the answers provided in this thesis are defensible, and have been reasonably made.

Finally, some data did exist but was not possible to obtain them, for various reasons. Of this final variety, a large number of requests were made for interviews with senior officials identified by the analysis as being central to the development of this policy, from across a number of key central government departments. However, throughout the time period of much of this policy's development, for the most part, these senior officials were reluctant to be involved in any research which touched on this sensitive issue. The following extract is form an email correspondence and is fairly typical of the response received to requests for interview access over this period.

> "Many thanks for the approach and I'm sorry not to have replied more quickly. I'm afraid that, reluctantly, I'd prefer not to do this - I think as a serving civil servant it would be difficult for me, given the political and other sensitivities with this topic. Sorry!" (Senior Civil Servant, email correspondence, 2007)

As the apologetic emails suggests, although these data do exist, they were not available at the time. The change in government in May 2010 did mean that a small number of the previously unavailable data source became more accessible, including a former Minister and two senior civil servants, and where time allowed, full advantage was taken of this change in circumstance. However, the methodological point is that this is an access issue, which flows for the controversy of the legislation. This is a challenge faced by all research, to some extent or other, and so there is not special reason why the framework offered here is particularly undermined by this issue.

Other data missing from this thesis included material from other government departments and from the executive more generally, from the period after the Legislation achieved Royal Assent until December 2006, when the revised plan for implementation of the identity cards scheme was announced. The analysis is also missing data on relationships

between government and backbenchers, particularly the Whips and sceptical MPs facing criticism from their constituencies.

Potential for bias and re-weighted sources

A separate issue which needs to be addressed is the potential threat presented by biased data for the overall weightings of commitment. Biased data which either over-emphasised, or perhaps under-emphasised, some element of commitment, and which was not accounted for in the analysis, presents a threat to the validity of the research. From the outset, it was expected that bias was potentially an issue, especially where data was drawn from biographies and the recalled accounts of the politics of this issue.

To deal with the potential for bias, it was assumed from the outset that certain types of data would be more susceptible to these issues than others. Of these, there was an expectation of exaggeration with the data drawn from politician's recollections about the degree of resolve they felt at the time. This is because once the conclusion of a series of events is known, hindsight might play a powerful corrective force on the coherence and resoluteness of the recollections of an individual's thought processes. So that the overall contribution of data drawn from this type of source on each limb of the definition did not unduly bias the conclusion of the analysis, additional corroboration of this evidence was sought. In the event that this was not available such as those situations described above where access to interviewees was not possible, or where certain types of data were not yet disclosed (due to the thirty year rule), or where such data did not exist (e.g. situations where data related specifically to individual subjective interpretations of events or

situations etc), then the validity of these types of data were called into question. The potential for questionable validity did not exclude these types of data from the analysis. Indeed, the contribution of some of these sources was invaluable in helping to form a picture of the internal executive politics surrounding the creation and formulation of this policy. However, data drawn from questionable sources was re-weighted so that its overall contribution to the score of commitment across the eight limbs of the framework was lessened. Instead, greater confidence was placed in data drawn from other sources so that it helped to even out scores across the limbs of the definition.

The following section brings together the scores for the eight limbs of the framework of commitment, across both of the arena subjected to analysis in this thesis in order to offer a summative analysis of the Government commitment to the identity cards policy.

Comparison of commitment across arenas

The case was selected on the basis of its extremity from the mean of a distribution, rather than because of its typicality. As Gerring argues (1999), extreme cases are more likely to exhibit in a particular pure form the important features associated with a case. The initial question of "how committed is the government?" can only be answered on the basis of a number of intuitive assumptions. The reasons behind making these assumptions was set out in Chapter One. Having now completed the analysis, it is possible to offer some clear statements about the extent to which these initial presumptions have been supported. The following section of the chapter addresses the question of the degree to which the

Government was committed to the identity cards policy, on the basis of the score attributed to each of the limbs of the definition, across both arenas.

This section looks across the arenas examined in Chapters Four and Five, to offer a comparison of the way that each limb of the definition was manifested when applied to the different arenas. This is the initial stage of integrating the scores for commitment across the two separate arenas, so that a full, summative account of the overall shape of political commitment in this case study can be pursued. A comparison of each strand of the definition is offered in turn.

As table 6.1 overleaf shows, the first element of the object of intention, the 'means', remained largely stable until 2006 both *within* arenas, and stable *across* both arenas. For example, despite strong pressure from backbench MPs from a coalition of crossbench, Liberal and Conservative peers in the Lords, the Government remained strongly committed to the retention of a mandatory link between identity card applications and designated documents. This meant that the consistency of the "means" were preserved across arenas. Those changes that were observed relate to the precise way that intention was expressed with respect to the developments of the existing stance. As expressed elsewhere in this thesis, the firmness with which the Government retained its position towards the "means", together with the longevity of this position, makes the dramatic shift away from a centralised register in December 2006 (Home Office, 2006) all the more significant. Future research is required to provide an explanation for this change in stance. Importing data from existing databases seems to run counter to many of the initial assumptions about the requirement for definitive data, which lay beneath the arguments for the introduction of the scheme.

Table 6.1. Comparison of intention across arenas for "means"

Object of intention 'means'	Summary of pattern of data by arena	
	Parliamentary arena	*Executive arena*
Population wide card scheme	- Issued to the whole of the legally resident population (Stable for whole period of analysis)	- Issued to the whole of the legally resident population (2002 - 2004) (Stable for whole period of analysis)
Cards to be supported by a purpose specific population register	A presumption of a new database being created but this is not emphasised - Emphasis on security of the database being ensured through the use of biometrics. (Stable for whole period of analysis) (Stable over period of analysis – 2006 shift not reflected in parliament)	- Strong emphasis on the newness of the database, and its security. - Emphasis on the accuracy of the information contained within the database. Used as basis for arguments for use of the scheme as a definitive a record. (Sharp shift in December 2006 from single, purpose built central register, to a federated system based on existing technological infrastructure). (Initially stable, shift in 2006)
Mandatory to enrol	Initially "universal entitlement cards", then "compulsory identity card" scheme. (Stable over period of analysis)	Initially "universal entitlement cards", then "compulsory identity card" scheme (Stable over period of analysis)
Link with designated documents	- Issued via of the link with designated documents. Passports and driving licenses with latter played down (Stable over of analysis, despite strong countervailing pressure)	Issued via of the link with designated documents. Passports and driving licenses. The driving license aspect was downplayed from 2005 onwards. (Stable over period of analysis)
Clarity about no requirement to routinely carry the cards	- Can be used in police work (Stable over period of analysis)	- Clarity about no requirement to routinely carry the cards. Use in routine police work a possibility (Stable over period of analysis)
Elements of data held	- Presumptions about access	- Certain elements of data held

on scheme to be shared routinely without data subjects consent.	to data expand over time. Initially for terrorist and serious and organised crime, shift to cover crime with exemptions only applying to audit rail. (Some change over period of analysis)	on scheme to be shared routinely without data subjects consent. (Stable over period of analysis)

By contrast with the Government's clarity over "means", its position towards the "ends" of the scheme, were not so clearly articulated. As shown in figures 4.1 and 5.1, although broadly similar in aims, the choice about which policy objective to be privileged at any one time was not consistently applied within arenas, or indeed across them. Table 6.2, together with figures 4.1 and 5.1 offer a comprehensive summary of the changing trajectory of the argument put forward by the Government and how this differed between arenas. The issue of national security, for example, was less strongly emphasised in the executive than in the parliamentary arena. Similarly, "convenience for the individual" was privileged in parliament, but not so in the executive arena. Overall, however, there was a greater degree of consistency in the manner and strength of demonstrations of intention towards "ends" in the executive arena. This contrasts with the propensity to emphasis different elements at different times in the parliamentary sphere.

Table 6.2. Comparison of intention across arenas for "ends"

Object of intention 'ends'	Summary of pattern of data by arena	
	Parliamentary arena	*Executive arena*
National Security	- Some link between card scheme and use as an anti-terrorism measure, but this was strongly downplayed in initial stages. Minister went so far as to rule out	- Although a role was always envisaged for the identity cards database to play a part in national security, the Home Office initially chose to distance the scheme from

	their 'substantial contribution to countering terrorism' (2002). - More emphasis given to this aspect of the argument for introduction in the White Paper (Home Office, 2003). Terrorists to target unprotected countries where citizen's identities were exposed. - Third of terrorist use false identities claim made in 2003. Claim continued through rest of process. - By 2005, there is little doubt about the benefits of identity cards for protecting people from terrorism. - Direct reference to al-Qaeda and claims from Interpol to supports argument. **Moderate/strongly demonstrated**	these types of applications. - From 2003 the focus shifted to asserting moderately that identity cards would play a significant role in preventing of terrorist related behaviour. Specific link with money laundering and funding of terrorist activities. - Significance increase over 2004 and 2005, with specific references being made to Spain's experience with identity cards and terrorism. - Role expanded to include active pursuit of terrorist directly (use of photograph stored on the identity register, recent addresses), not just their financial activity. Audit trail information also seen as key. - Declined as a rationale by 2006. **Moderately demonstrated**
Identity Fraud	- Initially (2002-03) very strongly emphasised. Links between identity fraud and other crimes are made clear. Suggestion that this is was pressing issue that needs to be addressed immediately. - In 2005, rather than identity frauds at the level of the individual being the issue, it was the crimes that it facilitated and the social costs of these crimes which was most strongly emphasised. - In this arena, identity fraud was significant in the argument for the introduction of identity cards right across the time span of interest in the case. **Moderate/strongly demonstrated**	- A principal justification for the introduction of the cards scheme. Costs economy £1.3 billion pa - Seen as a crime which facilitates other types of crime including money laundering, people trafficking, and terrorism. - Highlighted the emotional costs and the inconvenience to the individual of identity fraud. - Along with all of the other justification, identity fraud declined in emphasis in 2006, but was still offered as one of the primary justifications. **Strong demonstrated**
Prevention and detection of serious and organised crime	- Initial position of Home Office saw a role for the cards in dealing with "organised gangs", but this was not initially strongly	- Closely linked to the use of false identities, with some overlap between this element of the overall justification for the cards and

	emphasised. - Under Home Secretary Clarke, there was a clearer intention that the scheme was to have a stronger crime prevention related role. Scheme to have 'serious policing advantages'. (2004 onwards) - Link between false identities and other crimes is made explicitly (2002 onwards). - Later on in the process, 2004, Clarke argues that the police are keen to use the cards. - However, the emphasis on this element of the scheme falls away as scheme progresses through parliament. (2005 onwards) **Moderately demonstrated**	terrorism and identity fraud. Implicated are drug-related crimes, people-trafficking etc. The key element is the use of the audit trail. Use of card for high-value transaction together with use of audit trail of the cards use would help tackle these types of crime. **Moderately demonstrated**
Prevention and detection of routine crime	- No initial discussion of role for the cards scheme in this area. 2002. - Some role for the card is suggested for every day police work post 2003, but this is not strongly emphasised. **Weakly demonstrated**	- Initial reluctance to emphasise this element of the scheme gave way in 2004 to claims that biometrics held on the national register would have direct benefit in day-to-day police work. - Envisaged that biometrics might help with unsolved crimes, as scene of crime finger prints were to be matched against the register (2004). **Moderately demonstrated**
Illegal immigration and working	- Strongly emphasised in 2002 and 2003. This was a "crucial" element of the scheme. - Clear link made with illegal working. Use of the term 'pull-factor'. - Aim was to shift onus for checking eligibility to work onto business. - Use of biometrics was seen as key to this element of the card - 2005 the link between rights to access services, illegal immigration and working, and citizenship are emphasises as being part of the same issue.	- Illegal working and immigration are run together as the same issue. - Strongly emphasised across the whole of the case - The point was to "address the perception" that one could enter the UK freely and obtain free public services, or reduce the "pull-factor" on illegal immigration. - Important issue is also illegitimate use of free public services. Card to be used to access those services in early documentation. - Pull factor of ease with which

	Moderate/strongly demonstrated	individuals can obtain illegal work. Link with illegal working undermining the minimum age. **Strongly demonstrated**
Administration of public services	- Not a prominent feature of the argument put forward in this arena. No clear demonstration of intention. Appeal to obliquely on a number of occasions. - Links to electoral register were suggested, as were the requirement to use the card to access services. These arguments were not continued after the end of 2003. - Efficiency was associated with the scheme, but this was presented as a possibility for the future, rather than as a core element of the scheme. However, this was more strongly emphasised that in the executive arena. - In 2005, there was still a perception that the cards going to be utilised by public services, and that this was part of the justification for introduction. This was weakly emphasised, but present. This was not the case in the executive arena. **Moderately/weakly demonstrated.**	- The green paper on "Entitlement cards" (Home Office, 2002b) argued for "savings for service providers" through use of the national identity number. Also discussed "linking databases". - Private sector could make use of the scheme - Cards as a "gateway" to entitlement to other services. - These aspirations fell away as scheme progressed. Statements became for cautions, highlighting possibilities not concrete propositions. -Cross-departmental use of the National Identity Registrations Number (NIRN) was by 2005 not a 'core proposition' of the scheme, nor was that option costed. **Moderately/weakly demonstrated**
Convenience for the individual	- Suggestion that the scheme would ease the citizen's interaction with the state. - Under Clarke, the proposal is put forward that citizens will be able to exert more control over their data through the use of the card. **Moderately demonstrated**	- Cards to be of use as a more convenient travel to Europe. - In early stages, the possibilities of linking the cards with other public services like libraries, or medical information was mooted. - Medical data was backed away from amid privacy concerns. - After 2003, scheme was to ease interaction and make high value financial transactions progress more smoothly. **Moderately/weakly demonstrated.**

Citizenship	- This element did not feature prominently in the parliamentary arena. Under Blunkett, however, a number of references are made to developing citizenship. As a way to "welcome people's right to gain access to public services" (Blunkett, HC Deb, June 2002, Col. 239). - This element falls from debate entirely following Clarke's move to role of Home Secretary in late 2004. **Weakly demonstrated**	- Citizenship only really given any prominence early on during the initial "entitlement cards" phase (Home Office, 2002b). This strand of the argument is retained, but only peripherally. Most often emphasised by Blunkett. **Weakly demonstrated**

In seeking to achieve objectives, the nature of the capacity required, and the types of resources privileged in each arena is shown to contrast between the executive and the parliamentary arena. Table 6. 3, below, makes this distinction clear. "Hard" resources were directly required in the parliamentary arena, only on those occasions where the weight of number of MPs must be utilised to push through the Governments agenda on divisions. Aside from these scenarios, the timing of this element of the policy process, and the institutional rules of both Houses mostly precluded the utilisation of these types of resources. By contrast, "soft" resources are shown to be much more relevant. The tables suggest that the most prominent of these was the use of "persuasion", often realised through concessions. It is also likely that other forms of persuasion were highly relevant in this arena. Insight into the discussions between Labour Whips and backbenchers would have offered hugely useful evidence of the exercise of capacity in this arena.

By contrast, greater use of "hard" resources was identified in the executive arena, were specific administrative capacity was exercised to expand the numbers of individuals physically involved with the development of the proposals. Similarly, greater latitude is

available for the use of "funds" were existing budgets can be mobilised without first gaining parliamentary consent.

Table 6.3. Comparison of capacity across arenas by 'soft' and 'hard' resources

Capacity	Summary of pattern of data by arena	
	Parliamentary	*Executive*
Soft resources	- Offering non-core concessions to Labour backbenchers, especially the "super-affirmative procedure", "persuasion". - Agreement on publication of on-going costs. "persuasion". - Threats to limit discussion through use of programme motion. - "Persuade" backbenchers to vote strategically on important votes, with the Govt.	- "Administrative capacity" Inference that assurance to other departments that their resources not at risk were important. "persuasion", some "social relationships". Securing consent or securing consent from others at the administrative level. In face of *de facto* veto ability("type d" capacity) - 'Political capacity' building alliances with sufficient political weight in Cabinet, including "persuasion", "social relationships". Achieving acquiescence of treasury. "organisational arrangements". - Securing consent from others at the political level, in face of *de facto* veto. ("type b" capacity) - Securing consent at political level from parliament (other arena) with *de jure* veto. Some "persuasion" ("type a")
Hard resources	- Use of majority of number of to win votes in Commons "people"	- Building capacity – creation of ID cards program team "people" - Draw down on existing Home Office budget for preliminary costs "funds"

In the mobilisation of assets under conditions of risk, the Government faced similar issues in both arenas. Table 6.4 identifies "authority" and "time" as being the "soft" resources most often put at hazard in the parliamentary arena. Of "hard" resources, securing the required "number of MPs" in the appropriate lobby on Parliamentary Votes was also required. Abstentions and rebellions were the principal source of this risk, but even here, the greater significance of "soft" resources can be felt, as abstentions and rebellions are a product of an insufficient capacity to persuade. By contrast, credibility was the principal "soft" resource put at risk in the executive, but again, opportunity costs and time were also significant. Of those "hard" resources the Government were willing to put at risk, "funds" were most significant. The analysis suggests some interaction between the capacity to persuade, and the seriousness of this risk.

Table 6.4. Comparison of assets at hazards across arenas

Assets at hazard	Pattern of data coded assets at hazard by arena	
	Parliament	*Executive*
Soft	- Risk of defeat in Commons. Govt "authority". - Government forced to persuade sceptical backbenchers to vote tactically. Show dissatisfaction, but not defeat Govt. Utilise capacity to persuade. Risk "authority". - Bill returned to the Commons and whip was imposed. Particularly in relation to link between designated docs and identity cards applications. "Authority" - Opportunity costs associated with pursuing controversial legislation. Identity cards Bill 2005 required close to 110 hours of parliamentary time. Thirty hours + than the second longest item of Home Office legislation from that or the previous parl. session. "time" "organisational arrangements"	- Blunkett risking alienation from colleagues. Others perception of his over relied on authority of the PM to achieve his ends in Cabinet. PM also implicated, but less strongly "social relationships", and "persuasion", relating to abilities to influence others, secure consent. Risk "credibility", "authority". - Government "authority" at hazard. Potential for high profile Cabinet split over issue of identity cards. "Persuasion" over backbenchers – opportunity costs of pushing controversial legislation through cabinet.
Hard	- Weight of numbers put at hazard backbench abstentions. (Degree of interaction, link with capacity to "persuade", "soft resource")	- "Money" escalation of costs. Treasury refusal to underwrite scheme. Risk to departmental budget. (link with departmental "credibility", "soft resource")

In the process of persevering, certain costs had to be borne by the Government. As table 6.5 below shows, there were differences between the two arenas. In the executive arena, the risks were associated with the possibility of the erosion of cabinet cohesion and of the isolation of a Home Secretary not supported by his colleagues, and perhaps even of a Prime Minister. By contrast, in the parliamentary arena, the costs were more to do with the Government's authority over its own backbench supporters, and also with the impact on wider public opinion, the media and the various pressure groups and business interests. Secondly, the aspects of the scheme contested were different between arenas. A vigorously contested issue in the parliamentary arena was the principle that greater information centralisation and sharing of citizens' data were necessary requirements of the scheme was. This contrasted with the discussion in Cabinet, where compulsion was the greatest issue on which ministers were divided. The discussion which occurred in the administrative executive did not privilege the issue of the centralisation and sharing of data as a point of concern at all.

Table 6.5. Comparison of perseverance over time and against escalating costs across arenas

Limb of the definition	Summary of pattern of data by arena	
	Parliament	*Executive*
Perseverance over time	- Defeats inflicted in the Lords which the Government sought to overturn when returned to the Commons. - Assessed through a count of the number of occasions government was willing to do this. Incurred opportunity costs with use of additional time. Tested the authority of Government through its willingness to mobilise its majority repeatedly, on the same issue without offering concessions. - Parliamentary ping-pong – the specific challenges faced by the process of ping-ponging between the two houses. **Strongly demonstrated**	- Absence of discussion of credible alternatives, either to the scheme, or within the scheme. For example, although the option of a voluntary cards was offered in the Green paper (Home Office, 2002), this option was never costed. - Alternatives not treated seriously by officials. - Cabinet battles over identity cards carried on for more than two years. - Blunkett personal perception of the difficulty of persisting over this time offers some insight. **Moderately demonstrated**
Escalating costs	- Nevertheless, continuation of the position in the face of resistance implies accumulation of costs. - Escalation present but in a weaker form **Weakly demonstrated, but enough to be relevant**	- Perception of escalation in cabinet for both PM and Home Secretary. Source limited to Blunkett's recollections. Data reweighted accordingly. - Time, effort, and credibility riding on succeeding. Perception of costs not being sunk. - Lack of this element in the bureaucratic politics of this issue. **Moderately demonstrated**

Of all the different limbs analysed, Table 6.6 shows the least dramatic contrast between the two arenas. In part, much of this can be attributed to the fact that the effort at "self-binding" were not really central to the way that commitment was pursued in this case. Indeed, self-binding strategies were only pursued indirectly through claims that access to the US waiver scheme depended on the British Government's adoption of a system of the sort which the identity cards programme promised to provide. These claims were made, however, only fairly infrequently, and without great force. They amounted to attempt to invoke external constraint, as being so significant that they operated as a kind of self-binding. This was not, however, a very powerful argument, because the US requirements would have been satisfied by a much less sophisticated, and indeed cheaper, system without all of the additional features of the identity card scheme. In the parliamentary arena, much greater importance was placed on developing a reputation for resolution, at least in the short term, where the capacity of backbenchers to veto or delay legislation had to be considered. By contrast, this seemed to have been less of a priority in the executive were the civil service has much less independence from the government of the day, and so cannot so easily undermine particular initiatives, even if it dislikes them. Moreover, once the issue of the requirements on departmental resources had been addressed, and assurance had been given that the proposed scheme would not draw down on other departments budgets, there is no evidence in the thesis that the civil service was unhappy with the idea of an identity cards scheme, aside from some indication of a broad institutional inertia, particularly with respect to technology driven innovation.

Table 6.6. Comparison of "self-binding" and "reputation" across arenas

Limb of the definition	Summary of pattern of data by arena	
	Parliament	*Executive*
Self-binding	- Emphasis on the binding behaviour of other being so closely in line with the Government's own strategic interests that the binding serves to constrain the Government's future behaviour. - Some evidence for using claims about external binding as an indirect means of self-binding. The conditions for continuation of access to the US Visa waiver scheme, and US commitment to enhanced biometric passports, were used as reasons for which the government required the identity card scheme over whole period of analysis. **Weakly demonstrated**	- Similar strategy employed in the executive arena. Efforts of ministers to convince own party and the civil service of the significant of this US commitment to enhanced biometric passports. Argument used most from 2004 onwards in publicly available documentation. - Link made by Home Secretary Blunkett between intro of identity cards and the defence of social democracy against the right of right wing politics across Europe. **Moderately demonstrated**
Reputation	- Reputation for intention – strength with which "means" and "ends" were demonstrated shows robust effort to demonstrate intention to others. Shifts in representation of ends undermine the strength of this element of the definition. - Demonstration of willingness to exercise capacity in the commons – during Standing committee. Evidence of having faced down rebellions in the past, but not linked explicitly to this case. - Demonstrations of a reputation for resolve – issues such as Iraq, top up	- Reputation for intention – strength with which "means" and "ends" were demonstrated shows robust effort to demonstrate intention to others. - Reputation for capacity – Concerns about capacity an issue in the executive arena. Home Office ministers and the department appealed to success with UKPS system. - Reputation for resolve – limited data. Cabinet colleagues identified sense of resolve in Home Secretary Blunkett. No data available on either Home Secretary Clarke/ or Reid, or department. Weak on this strand.

	fees send clear message to would be defectors on backbenchers. Also attempts to argue for resolve when debating issue of compulsion. - Government pointed out that this has always been the plan, and so efforts to alter this aspect of the legislation will not be successful. Consistent position on this issue over time. **Moderately demonstrated**	**Moderately demonstrated**

Table 6.7 shows a great deal of difference between arenas with respect to thought-style. This sharp difference must, however, be assessed in the context of the shortcoming of the available data, highlighted earlier in this chapter. Once data issues are taken into account, the findings are perhaps less significant. Notwithstanding these issues, the data that does exist in the executive arena shows the relevance of this measure, with the Home Secretary articulating concerns about losses of resources already expended if ends are not achieved. The significance of this thought-style for perceptions of the potential loss of political resources therefore needs further research.

Table 6.7 Comparison of" thought-style" across arenas

Limb of the definition	Summary of pattern of data on limb of the definition	
	Parliament	*Executive*
Thought style	- Little credible evidence of though-style in the parliamentary arena. Issue of missing data **No evidence**	- Clear evidence of thought style in Blunkett's treatment of costs associated with continuation of his battle with Cabinet. Treating sunk costs as not sunk. Looks to make good on the resources that have been invested. Issue of loosing is more troubling than winning is beneficial. - Score on this limb tempered by over reliance on only one aspect of the data from a potentially bias source. Reduces the overall contribution of this dimension across both arenas. Reweighted. **Weakly demonstrated**

The judgement-based scores for the strength with which each of the eight limbs of commitment are articulated in the analysis above can be brought together in the following summary table 6.8. This shows the differences in the strength of commitment exhibited by the Labour Government to its identity card programme between the two arenas. However, these differences must be assessed in the context of the previous discussion of the shortcomings identified earlier in the data, available for this limb of the definition.

Table 6.8. Summative assessment of scores for commitment across both arenas

		Eight limbs of framework for political commitment							
	Arenas	*Necessary definitional conditions*					*Strategies*		*Indicator*
		(1) Intention	*(2) Capacity*	*(3) Assets*	*(4) Perseverance*	*(5) Escalation*	*(6)Self-binding*	*(7) Reputation*	*(8)Thought-style*
Strength of evidence for each limb after reweighting	*Parliamentary arena*	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Strong	Weak but enough to be relevant	Weak	Moderate	None
	Executive arena	Moderate	Strong	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	Summative score	**Moderate**	**Strong**	**Moderate**	**Strong/ moderate**	**Weak/ moderate**	**Weak/ moderate**	**Moderate**	**Weak**

As previously discussed, the case was selected on the basis of an initial assessment of its "extreme" value on the phenomenon of interest (Gering, 1999). As Chapter One showed, there were good reasons for suspecting that the identity cards policy was a clear case of strong political commitment. As table 6.8 shows, however, this does not seem to be the case. Indeed, on the basis of the application of the framework, the strength of the commitment is rather less than it first appeared. This is not to say that it was not strong in some respects. On two key strands of the definition, "perseverance" and "capacity", the Government's stance was shown to exhibit strong characteristics. Both of these elements are a necessary condition of commitment in the definition developed for this thesis. However, a clear majority of the limbs showed only moderately strong commitment. A second key issue, clearly demonstrated by table 6.8, is that in this case, the strength of commitment differs significantly between arenas. Commitment appears to have been expressed much more consistently in the executive arena, in comparison with the parliamentary arena.

These two findings are significant. The differences between arenas, if the analysis is robust, can be convincingly accounted for when recognising the differences in the institutional character of the policy process in each of the arenas as they relate to

achieving agreement for controversial policy measures which require primary legislation. In the parliamentary arena, getting a controversial item of legislation through both houses of Parliament when a significant proportion of parliamentarians are opposed requires a high degree of perseverance. By contrast, such perseverance is not usually required in the executive arena because the degree of constitutional authority of individual ministers is so great that departmental officials have fewer opportunities or powers than actors in the parliamentary arena, to challenge the principle of a ministerially approved plan. This is particularly relevant if the principle of the plan in question had the additional authority of Prime Ministerial support. This is not to say that getting a controversial measure through a cabinet committee does not require some perseverance. Indeed, a good degree of perseverance might be required if a consensus cannot be reached and the Minister finds it necessary to bring the matter to Cabinet on more than one occasion. Indeed, this situation occurred in this case study, where Blunkett was required to persevere between 2002 and 2003 with efforts to reach consensus on the principle of introducing identity cards legislation. But when measured at the level of the Government as a whole, the observation stands. Furthermore, once the principle of the policy has been settled, the distribution of responsibility in the executive is such that in the absence of a strong rationale for intervention, other cabinet ministers are organisationally predisposed not to intervene because of their strong focus on their own department.

On the other hand, the responsibility of the executive for implementation and for incurring direct public expenditure means that costs associated with "hard" resources are quickly escalated in this arena. This is not typically the case in the parliamentary arena.

Finally, it is more likely that "thought-style" would attract a higher score in the executive than in the parliamentary arena, because of the types of data used to examine each of these arenas. There are strong grounds for suspecting that ministers would tend to be careful not to reveal evidence of thought-style in parliamentary exchanges because such candid revelations would not be conducive to their efforts to persuade and cajole others in such a confrontational environment. Efforts to capture thought-style in this way rest on a poor argument. By contrast, memoir evidence, interviews etc. present the opportunity for more frank reflection on the part of the data subject about their subjective perceptions and motivations, and are therefore much more amenable to the analysis. The difference for score achieved for strength of commitment between the two arenas can therefore be explained, in part, by taking into account the kinds of information revealed by government ministers and by other government sources in the data to which was appealed. Difference which flow from the institutional character of the policy making process in each of these political arenas are also important.

The aggregate score of "moderate" for the limb of the definition dealing with "intention" also needs careful consideration. Although the aggregation process offered a means by which the commitment of the whole of government to the scheme across both arenas could be easily assessed, it also masked one of the most significant findings on this strand of the definition. As shown in table 6.1 and 6.2, the Government's commitment was much stronger towards the "means" rather than the "ends" of the policy. The goals and the rational for the introduction of an identity card scheme shifted quite considerably over the course of the policy process. Indeed, some of the candidate goals were at times elevated to the position of being the most important contribution of the scheme, before they were shifted back down the ranks of justification, and then elevated once more.

Such violent lurching between arguments for introduction can be convincingly addressed by once again pointing to the difference in the institutional character of the two arenas. Given that it is the role of the executive to undertake the delivery and implementation of complex schemes, the focus of attention on the "means" is perhaps not surprising. Clarity of "means" is a necessary criterion for successful policy delivery. In the absence of information about what the policy requires to be put in place, government officials are not in a position to deliver or to implement policy aspirations. Such information is required for a range of substantive tasks associated with this role, including, for example, writing tender documents and contracts for suppliers, the specification of the procedures for procurement and the criteria against which activity is to be monitored. The nature of the parliamentary arena contrasts sharply with this. Its institutionalised role is one of facilitating the provision of a way to accommodate competing political interests and pressures. Given this role, it is consistent with the nature of the arena that some vagueness of "ends", as well as some limited inconsistencies, are tolerated. Indeed, Crick (1962) argues that this is what politics is for. It enables a degree of acquiescence, or perhaps even support, to be drawn from a wide spectrum of often competing interests and views, and that this is best achieved by appealing to the different groups in different ways. Lindblom (1959) makes a similar point, arguing that it is much easier for policy makers to find an agreement if they focus primarily on what they are going to do, rather than deal with the issue of why or how they are going to do it. In the process of accommodating multiple political demands, broad ideas are privileged over detail. The adversarial nature of the British parliamentary system very clearly crystallises this point. By nature, it stifles efforts to debate technical detail, and instead concentrates debate on points of principle, on aspirations, broad goals or "ends" in policy fields. Ensuring acquiescence under such

conditions requires a government to make a case which captures a reasonably broad range of goals. In this context, the precision and consistency of these goals is secondary to the main aims of achieving enough votes to secure the passage of the legislation. It therefore follows that governments which seek to secure enough votes will seek to moderate its communication in parliament in such a way that "ends" are privileged. By contrast, in the executive arena, efforts to clearly articulate "means" will take precedent, with enough material on "ends" to provide some guidance on how means are to be understood.

Appropriateness of case selection strategy and construct validity

The finding that the Government was committed strongly to the identity card measure on two of the eight limbs but only moderately on most of the others, runs counter to the case selection rationale put forward in this thesis. This raises the possibility that the identity card policy was not an appropriate case for the purpose of concept formation. A second related methodological issue is the question of concept validity. Even if the case selection strategy proves to be robust, it might still be the case that the definition offered in this thesis is not capturing, or giving an unwarranted degree of emphasis to a particular dimension of political commitment.

The initial justification for selection of the identity cards case was the fact that the programme was controversial, but also that it was one which the Government was prepared to persevere with. These were not the only reasons, however. It was also observed in Chapter One that this scheme was considered to be expensive, that it was strongly opposed, and that at times is was genuinely difficult for the Government to

continue. Furthermore, the scheme came to be associated with the ideological character of the Labour government's overall programme, and required the significant devotion of political, financial, and organisational resources in order to get its way. Chapter Two presented a definition which actually preserved a good number of these initial insights as being relevant to commitment. These were in relation to the limbs of escalating costs, (controversy, difficulty, opposition), perseverance, intention (ideological importance) and capacity (resources).

As we have seen, some of the important aspects of these initial expectations used in case selection, tended to be supported by the central findings of the cross-arena comparison. As table 6.8 shows, the highest scores for commitment across both arenas were for the limbs of "perseverance" and "capacity". Even with the experience of conducting this analysis, the initial judgement about the degree of commitment still seems to be reasonable. It is hard to think of an alternative policy which one might identify as an example of strong commitment on an intuitive basis that did not exhibit a set of criteria very similar to these. The usefulness of the case for the development of this concept, therefore, still seems reasonable.

If we accept the central finding, then it might be the case that even very strongly committed governments will exhibit "moderate" scores on several limbs, at least in some arenas. Therefore, if the definition and its application are shown to be robust, then this case study has suggested findings that are of some importance about the nature of governmental commitment.

Moreover, the fact that the case shows greatest strength in commitment on the limbs of perseverance and capability also suggests that the definition is capturing some of the most important features that were used intuitively to assess the degree of commitment for case selection. Conversely, few of the limbs attracted "weak" scores, and none did so consistently across the two arenas. Weaker scores were much more likely to be exhibited on the strategies and the indicator than on the necessary conditions. This also suggests that the definition is not over weighting less important aspects of commitment.

The criterion of "reflective equilibrium" is offered as a standard of construct validity. It suggests that a concept remains consistent and coherent after adjustment, that it captures enough of the core essence of the lay motion, and that we have confidence in any revisions that need to be made, in light of the concept coherence, consistency, and ability to capture what are core aspects. With regards to political commitment, the definition was developed in Chapter Two to show its consistency and coherence, and also how it captured core lay ideas. This was achieved by grounding the concept in the wider social science literature. Both in the introductory chapter and in this section of the thesis, the argument has been made that the social scientific concept of political commitment captures enough of what is really important in most people' s particular but initial judgment of the identity card case, to meet Rawls' standard of reflective equilibrium (Rawls, 1970).

If we accept the definition based on the literature review and if the argument presented above is also accepted that the finding on the particular case captures the really important aspects, then the definition offered in this thesis should be regarded as being in reasonable reflective equilibrium with the lay idea of political commitment. In that case, we have

reason to accept the revisions to our prior expectations about the strength of commitment that arise from the finding that on many of the limbs in at least one of the arenas, political commitment turned out to be moderate or even weak. This surprising finding is evidence of the value of the definition, and its contribution to political science.

Research agenda

The principle contribution to knowledge of this case study has been methodological. It consists in the formulation of a novel and robust definition and framework for understanding political commitment. Issues of concept formation are fundamental to the practise of social research, and no serious scholar can afford to disregard their significance. Nevertheless, concept formation is not an end in itself. Rather, it represents the foundation from which empirical social science can achieve the important task of developing and testing causal theory (Goertz, 2005). To this end, the following research agenda is presented which flows from the work carried out in this thesis.

The eight limbed definition sets out a structure on which future explanatory theories of political commitment can be built. Such explanations would need to be capable of accounting for the ordinal scores on each of the five necessary conditions at the core of the definition. In addition, the argument presented in this thesis also suggests something about the nature of the structure of such explanations. Because of the differences identified between the demonstrations of commitment in each of the arenas studied, the analysis conducted in this thesis also suggests that future explanatory work would need to be sensitive to the differences that political commitment is likely to exhibit between

arenas. This leads to the suggestion that, because arenas are predominantly identified by their institutional characteristics, it is probable that those explanations which appeal to institutional factors are likely to be privileged.

Very broadly, some of the types of explanations which might be offered on each of the limbs of the definition are as follows:

For "intention", the analysis strongly suggests that explanations put forward to account for this strand of the definition need to be able to cope with the fact that particular intended goals and "means" might be settled differently in the empirical analysis, both categorically, and ordinally. The argument offered in this chapter made some tentative suggestions as to why this might be the case. These drew on the institutional characteristics of the areas in which the debate occurred as principal explanatory variables. However, a fuller account of this phenomenon would need to be capable of explaining why specific particular chosen "means" tended to remain stable over time. For example, an explanation would need to be offered to the question of why the Government persuaded itself of the reliability of the technologies on the very large scale involved, before they had been tested. Similarly, explanations would also need to be capable of addressing why the long held commitment to the technological structure of the National Identity Register (NIR) was altered so drastically in 2006. A further important issue highlighted by the analysis is why each of the "ends" were subject to change at the points in which they were. Specifically, why after terrorist attacks of 7/7 was the link between identity cards and prevention of terrorism diminishing in the Government's presentation of aspiration for the scheme?

The concept of "intention" offered here, actually shares a great deal of similarity with the notion of "preference", which is dealt with in some detail in traditional political science. Explanations on this strand of the definition might therefore include reference to ideas based accounts of party ideology, particular interests being served by appealing to certain demographics through government demonstrations of intention. Institutional constraints on actions might be put forward, which flow from existing data protection laws. Similarly, more implicit institutional accounts would be credible, which are driven by policy makers' perceptions of the public acceptability of such schemes etc. and their effect in limiting the possible scope of things that might be intended. Most importantly, with regards to "intention", the question of the timing of the original point at which intention was fixed on the card scheme in respect to both "means" and "ends", would need to be convincingly addressed.

Similarly, the analysis of "capacity" in general (the distinction between "hard" and "soft" resources), and of those resources mobilised specifically in the executive arena (see table 3.2), set out the attributes that need to be explained on this limb. We might expect to find explanations which privilege soft-resource political capacity as being especially important, and concentrate on leadership-backbench relations in the parliamentary arena, particularly the work of Government Whips. In the executive, it is likely that this same topic would focus on ministerial support. Future research would be best directed at areas such as the interaction between the expenditure of resources which deplete over time, whilst others rise simultaneously (such as government "authority" and "reputation for resolve").

In relation to "assets at hazard", explanations must address the perceptions of risk by policy-makers, and especially politicians. Of particular significance would be how judgements about risks are weighed in context. Similarly, explanations of perseverance would look to the risks or pay-offs associated with persevering or not doing so, over time. Similarly, explanations of the role of the perception of cost escalation would have to address the relationship between those resources which accrue over time and those which are depleted. This will be important in research which seeks to explain the sustainability of commitment. It might well be the case, therefore, that escalation of costs and assets at hazard will be taken together in an explanatory analysis.

This explanatory work would progress most convincingly using a comparative case study design utilising either a most-similar or a most-different case selection strategy. (Przeworski and Teune, 1982).

Conclusions

This thesis has offered an original contribution to knowledge in the form of a novel, well defined, and robust concept of political commitment. It has been conceptualised, operationalised and a series of predominantly qualitative measures have been put forward. In addition, this concept has been applied to an illustrative empirical case study so that it, and the definition, could be tested for robustness, and where necessary qualified with respect to its performance in capturing the most salient features of that case. In doing so, the work of this thesis makes an important contribution to the growing literature on concept formation in social research methodology. (Collier and Gerring, 2009; Goertez,

2005; Sartori, 1979). Similarly, the insight of this thesis have also allowed for the precise measurement of the concept in a way that has not been dealt with before in the literature, and has therefore made a significant contribution to knowledge in the methodological literature on measurement and theorising in qualitative historical political science (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer, 2003).

This thesis has also made a contribution to knowledge in the form of the production of novel and interesting results, and non-obvious facts. Similarly, the thesis has presented robust evidence for differences in the expression of commitment between arenas, which has been provisionally attributed to the institutional characteristics of those arenas. The analysis also highlighted the instability of "ends" and the contrasting stability of "means", and the fact that measuring all eight limbs empirically and separately changed initial and intuitive, gross scores on commitment. A further point flows from this. The thesis has opened up a new agenda for political science research in this area by firstly making a clear contribution to the concept formation literature, an increasingly recognised central task in the discipline (Collier and Gerring, 2009), and has, secondly, implied a new structure for the development of explanatory theory into the nature of commitment. In doing so, the work of this thesis points the way for future work which offers an alternative understanding of some aspects of the policy making process which are currently neglected in existing literature. In particular, this thesis implies that a theory of policy making is required which is capable of incorporating in a precise way the risks a policy must run following its adoption by a government as parts of its policy agenda before the point at which the policy reaches the stage of implementation. Finally, the analysis has presented a clear and precise exposition of what remains to be explained about the former Labour Government commitment to the identity cards policy.

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