

**“The Concept ‘Governance’ Within Parliamentary  
Discourse 1983-93”**

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## **The Concept ‘Governance’ within Parliamentary Discourse 1983-93**

### **Abstract**

We explore the occurrences of the word ‘governance’ within parliamentary debates and documents in the period between 1983 and 1993. Our principal aims are to determine the frequency of these occurrences and identify the meanings arising from and changes of meaning associated with them. These samples from the parliamentary discourse demonstrate that political actors had been using the term intermittently some time before it gained currency within the academic political science literature (broadly defined). We establish that two broad meanings predominated, though neither could be said to align with what has become the familiar meaning within the academic literature since the mid-1990s. It would appear that the use within parliamentary discourse was in some sense transitional and we examine how this might contribute to our understanding of ‘governance’ as an instance of conceptual change.

An indicator of the changes to a nation’s political culture can be found in the rise and fall of terms and concepts within the language of political discourse, the public language of politics that informs and nurtures that political culture. It is a language that is both specialist and public: specialist in that it involves identifiable terms, concepts, conventions and modes of expression that define its domain of reference, and public in that it extends beyond the domain of political activity to embrace those whose participation in political activity is often minimal. Political actors use this language to express their intentions, justify their actions, and court public support. And precisely because the process of mobilising or persuading public opinion is central for political activity, non-specialists are drawn into, engage with, and at times, actively reproduce and circulate key elements of that discourse. In this way a language of political discourse can be understood as “a social force and as a kind of political behaviour” (Corcoran 1979, xi). It is a dynamic process in which political actors continuously rework the constituent features, yet at the same time these remain familiar enough to non-specialists to be recognisable over time even though novel political meanings are being attached to them in unfamiliar ways.

Broadly interpreted this is the problem of what Ball (1988) and others (Ball, Farr & Hansen 1989; Richter 1995; Koselleck, 1998; Bevir 1999) term ‘conceptual change’, namely how to explain the rise and fall of particular keywords or concepts within a given language of political discourse. This might involve an analysis of shifts in the usage of individual words or concepts, or even whole sets of concepts such that the concern is with a shift from one language of political discourse to another. Whether the focus is with the individual word or with larger units of analysis it is clear that the process of conceptual change mostly involves one of two processes (or at times both); namely neologistic invention or the reconfiguration of the meanings of already existing terms. While neologisms are important indicators of conceptual change within any given language of political discourse, our concern is with the reconfiguration of already existing conceptual meanings. It is our view that the rise to prominence of a term to the status of a keyword is usually related to the fact that the term itself is in some way familiar to political agents and ordinary citizens alike. In this respect we agree with Ball (1988, 5), and to a certain extent Bevir and Rhodes (2003, 25 & 27), that it is likely that conceptual change arises principally from the reconfiguration of already existing

meanings that are themselves discursively generated from the reconfigured archipelagos of conceptual meanings, both new and reworked.

In recent years keywords such as 'competition', 'the market', 'liberalise', 'contestability', 'privatisation', 're-engineering', 'efficiency', 'globalisation', and 'governance' have taken a leading position within contemporary political discourse, and hence constitute one or more archipelagos of conceptual understanding. This paper will be concerned with the last mentioned keyword: 'governance', a word of marginal significance for most of the past several hundred years, but which attained a discursive dominance across the industrialised world in the late 1990s that has been as remarkable as it has been widespread. Yet despite the wide proliferation of writing about 'governance', there is very little discussion that links its recent status as a keyword to the contemporary language of political discourse. At best it is noted that the new concept occurs within, or even 'relies on', a cluster of new concepts, deriving its 'meaning in large part from its place within [this] body of concepts' (Bevir & Rhodes 2003, 25 & 27), thereby signifying that a conceptual change has occurred. But how has that change occurred? What is the direction of influence? Does it originate in the discourse of the specialist scholars (ie the political scientists), or that of the practitioners (ie public administrators), or the political actors (ie politicians and their staff), or some combination of all three, or none of the above? We do not propose to address these questions directly in this paper.

Our principal aim in this paper is to explore the occurrences of the word 'governance' within Australian parliamentary debates and documents in the period between 1983 and 1993. We aim to determine the frequency of these occurrences, the occasions for them, and the meanings that can be discerned from that usage. This should give some indication of the role, if any, of parliamentary discourse in bringing the term back into popular usage. We have chosen this ten year period for two reasons. First, exploring the parliamentary discourse between 1983 and 1993 as a discrete body of usage enables us to bring it into alignment with that of the political scientists. This will also enable us to draw some tentative conclusions concerning what connections, if any, might exist between the two arenas of political discourse. Secondly, and more significantly, it is clear that within the specialist political science literature, and even the newspaper articles, 'governance' was used relatively infrequently before 1992 (Jose 2007). Only after 1992 does its use therein suggest that a new conceptual load was beginning to emerge as the term came to be harnessed into new conceptual configurations. However, as noted, our intention herein remains limited to gaining some insight into the term's frequency of use within parliamentary discourse in this ten year period.

The principal means to do was through an examination of the published transcripts of parliamentary debates and the associated parliamentary papers. The electronic versions of the Hansards for both the House of Representatives and Senate were searched to uncover all usages of the term 'governance' from 1983 to 1993 inclusive. Titles of Parliamentary Papers from 1987 onwards were searched, electronically for the period from 1992 to the present (2007), while the earlier titles were thoroughly checked using the published annual indices. The frequency of mentions was tabulated for both sets of documents (see Table 1).

<b>Use in Parliamentary Discourse 1983-1993</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Hansards (HR &amp; Senate)</b>	<b>Parliamentary Papers</b>
<b>1983</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1984</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1985</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1986</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1987</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1988</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1989</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1990</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1991</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1992</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1993</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1</b>

**Table 1: Frequency of ‘Governance’ in Parliamentary Discourse**

As can be seen from Table 1, before 1988, use of the term was relatively uncommon in parliament, averaging about four instances per annum. Between 1988 and 1991 uses of the term averaged a little over twelve per annum. In 1992 and 1993 the frequency was thirty and twenty-three instances respectively. In general, the frequency of use was broadly congruent with previously obtained data for the frequency of the term in other readily measurable Australian databases such as the FACTIVA newspaper and news magazine electronic index, and the APAIS current affairs electronic index (see Jose 2007). That is, parliamentary usage of ‘governance’ paralleled that to be found in the political science literature, and more widely within newspapers and magazines (See Table 2).

<b>Year</b>	<b>Use in Australian Journals/Newspapers</b>					<b>Use in Parliament</b>	
	<b>Pol Sci</b>	<b>Bus</b>	<b>Law</b>	<b>Educ</b>	<b>Newspapers</b>	<b>Hansard</b>	<b>Parlt Papers</b>
<b>1983</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1984</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1985</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1986</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1987</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1988</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1989</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1990</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1991</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1992</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1993</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1</b>

**Table 2: Frequency of ‘Governance’ in Australian Political Discourse**

Returning to the parliamentary record, we identified two broad meanings being used by politicians between 1983 and 1993, which for convenience we have termed Gov#1 and Gov#2. Gov#1 captures an older, more familiar meaning that derives from the long-held custom of referring to the decision-making structures in larger, autonomous or semi-autonomous public organisations such as churches, hospitals, schools or

universities as venues for a form of administration called ‘governance’. A typical example from 1930 is in an ecclesiastical biography where an Anglican bishop is commended for putting the ‘governance’ of his Diocese upon a more efficient footing (Johnson 1930, 43). Gov#2 describes government generally, and tends to emerge as a synonym for ‘government’, though its use homonymically cannot be ruled out as we note below. In the contemporary context of the 1980s and 1990s Gov#2 represents a newer form of usage, yet it is not strictly new because it in fact dates back to very early understandings of the term that prevailed in an era when modernist institutions and practices of governing, what we have been accustomed to refer to as ‘government’, were unheard of. Today, specialist historians still use the term sometimes in this way, as a default-word where for example one might wish to discuss power structures and administration in Anglo-Saxon England at a time when the concept of the modern state had yet to gain discursive traction, as in ‘governance of the realm’ (Reynolds 1999, 65). This was also a time in which the idea of the state was itself beginning to shift its meaning from “denoti[ing] the idea of a prevailing regime” to that of referring “to the institutions of government and means of coercive control” (Skinner 1989, 101), another point that we return to below. It is possible to ascribe other meanings by using more fine-grained interpretations, but we would suggest that the two noted above best capture the basic dynamics of what was happening in those years, as will be demonstrated below. Further, these two categories enable us to group the meanings so that it can be demonstrated that a contemporary shift in meaning was underway.

Most forms of usage were easily allocated to one or other of these two categories, with only two instances that could be said to be indeterminate as to their dominant meaning. Until 1987 then, uses of Gov#2 are rare, with four in that year and only three in the preceding four years. Thereafter, more than half of the usages were Gov#2. These are presented below in Table 3.

<b>Use in Parliamentary Discourse 1983-1993</b>				
<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Instances</b>	<b>Gov#1</b>	<b>Gov#2</b>	<b>Indeterminate</b>
<b>1983</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1984</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1985</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1986</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1987</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1988</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1989</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1990</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1991</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1992</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1993</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>2</b>

**Table 3: ‘Governance’ in Use in Parliamentary Discourse 1983-1993**

Certain individual MPs and Senators favoured ‘governance’, especially in its Gov#2 sense. The Prime Minister at the time, Bob Hawke, was the most frequent user of this meaning in the earlier period when it was beginning to make its presence felt around

1987. From about 1988 Tim Fischer of the National Party also began using the term in this sense, and he was the most frequent user of it in the sample as a whole, with thirteen instances. The presence of a small number of instances in the early part of the period, from 1983-86, suggests that the Gov#2 meaning did not depend on the upswing in usage in academic and related literature emerging at the end of that decade in the public policy journal *Governance*, started in 1988, and elsewhere (eg May & Williams 1986; Jackson 1988; Myers 1988; Keating & Holmes 1990; Mascarenhas 1990), although it does not rule out the influence of academic work published earlier in the 1980s (eg Wittrock 1983; Page 1983).

The instances of Gov#1 persist through the period (ie 1983-93), and this suggests that at least at this time, there was no replacement or redundancy of this meaning as a result of the emergence of Gov#2 and its seemingly growing acceptance. It is possible that the change in meaning was achieved by participants in parliamentary debates with little or no outside stimulus, merely an awareness of the term from already existing usages, and a willingness to use the term more loosely in discussions where an alternative to terms such as 'government' or 'decision making structure' appeared to be called for. Given the intense atmosphere of the Reaganite/Thatcherite era and its signature theme of 'less government', the search by parliamentarians for such a particle of political vocabulary would not be at all surprising, although nothing in the actual contexts of utterances provides us with evidence one way or the other. As noted, titles of Parliamentary Papers from 1987 onwards were also checked, and examined as needed. No instance of 'governance' was found in the period before November 1993 and the publication of the Audit Committee Report on Corporate Governance. After that time, the term was used three times before 2000, and thirteen times from 2000 to the present. In none of the three instances before 2000 was the Gov#2 meaning to be found. This meaning only starts to appear after 2000, indicating a pronounced time lag between its usage in Parliament and its incorporation into the titles of Parliamentary Papers, even though there were numerous places in earlier titles where a Gov#2 meaning might well have been used. It could also be speculated that the lag between the uses of 'governance' within parliamentary debates and its appearance in the titles of parliamentary papers might simply be an indication that the former involves gaining a debating advantage whereas the latter does not. While that might be a plausible point to explain its occurrences it does not explain why it should have been that particular word at that particular time.

The Gov#1 usage is reasonably evenly distributed through the samples, and though increasing overall from zero in 1983 to six in 1993, with a total of forty-nine out of 123, relative to Gov#2 its frequency could be said to be declining. It is quite clear that these Gov#1 instances correspond with the idea of semi-autonomous institutional decision-making structures. In almost every Gov#1 instance the institutions in the Hansard samples include one or more of the following:

- government and non-government schools (Senator Baume, 18 Oct. 1983; Senator Baume, 8 May 1985; Senator J.A. Jenkins, 29 Aug. 1988; Senator P.F.S. Cook 12 Dec. 1991),
- tertiary colleges and universities (J. Dawkins 9 May 1984; Senator P.A. Walsh 31 May 1984; P. Duncan 20 May 1986; Senator B. Kilgariff 4 June 1987; Petition to HR 7 Dec. 1987; Petition to Senate 15 March 1988; Senator J.A. Jenkins 19 May 1988; Senator J.O.W. Watson 29 Sept. 1988; Senator G.F. Richardson 12 Apr. 1989; A.C. Holding 29 May 1989; J.O.W. Watson 17 Aug.

1989; Senator S. Spindler 12 Dec. 1990; 5 March 1991; Senator B.C. Teague 1 Dec. 1992),

- the Schools Authority in the ACT (Senator A.W.R. Lewis 29 May 1985),
- the Protestant church in China (Senator B.C. Teague 14 Dec. 1987),
- the United Nations Organisation (G.T. Johns 3 Nov. 1988),
- nursing homes (M.C. Tate 17 Dec. 1990),
- the International Wool Secretariat (J.C. Kerin 30 May 1991; R.F. McMullan 5 June 1991), and
- international aviation (D.F. Jull 27 May 1992).

In addition there were usages in relation to the Senate chamber (Senator Aulich 25 June 1992) and to the Commonwealth Parliament generally (T.A. Fischer 13 Oct. 1992; Senator J. Herron 17 Dec. 1992), although it is acknowledged that Parliament is not strictly speaking a semi-autonomous institutional decision-making structure, due to its unique place in the constitution.

Another Gov#1 usage can be found in the category of 'corporate governance', a particular usage that grew significantly throughout the 1990s to become one of the more familiar meanings at present. As far as can be determined there was no record of any mention of 'corporate governance' in the Commonwealth Parliament between January 1983 and November 1990. In the subsequent three years until December 1993 there was a cluster of eleven instances of this usage, all of which were in the context of public debate surrounding the perception of corporate misdeeds during the heady days of the 1980s takeover and speculation boom. Corporate governance was mentioned in general terms on 15 November 1990 and again on 19 June 1992 (Senator I.G. Campbell). On 15 October of that year, newspaper publicity of corporate issues and committee discussions stimulated three instances (Senators D.J. Kerr, I.G. Campbell, & P. E. Beahan respectively), and on 26 November 1992, 'governance' was mentioned by Senator Bolkus in the context of the Second Reading of the Corporate Law Reform Bill No 2 of 1992. All other mentions of corporate governance were during 1993, the last year of this survey, and these six instances were all references to the Audit Committee Report on Corporate Governance which was presented to Parliament on 25 November 1993.

Turning now to the instances of Gov#2 meaning, it is evident that most of these involved a terminological substitution of 'governance' for 'government', although it cannot be determined if the intended meaning remained unchanged. This terminological substitution usually occurred in phrases such as

- 'the governance of this country' (R.J.L. Hawke 10 Sept. 1985; A.J. Griffiths 29 May 1987; R.J.L. Hawke 10 Dec. 1987; T.A. Fischer 17 March 1988, 28 Apr. 1988, 10 Nov. 1988, 28 Feb. 1989, 12 Sept. 1990; R.J.L. Hawke 7 Nov. 1990; K. C. Beazley 12 Nov 1990; R.J.L. Hawke 29 May 1991; T.A. Fischer 20 June 1991, 22 Aug. 1991; R.J.L. Hawke 27 Nov. 1991; Senator Peter Cook 28 May 1992; T.A. Fischer 8 Oct. 1992; I. McC. Sinclair 15 Oct. 1992; Senator R.F. McMullan 15 Dec. 1992; Senator W.G. O'Chee 26 Oct. 1993), or
- 'good governance of this country' (T.A. Fischer 17 March 1988, 16 Aug. 1989; W.E. Snowdon 25 June 1992; Senator R. Kemp 12 Nov. 1992; W.G. O'Chee 27 Sept. 1993).

Other variations include:

- 'the governance it [i.e. Parliament] provides to the country at large' (T.A. Fischer 10 May 1988),

- ‘principles for the governance of a nation’ (Governor-General 22 Aug. 1988),
- ‘the governance of this great nation of ours (G.D. Gibson 10 May 1990),
- ‘in the governance of that country’ (Senator S. Spindler 12 Dec. 1990),
- ‘Australian Federal governance’ (T.A. Fischer 7 Nov. 1991),
- ‘the governance of the nation’ (Senator R.K.R. Alston 3 June 1992),
- ‘the governance of Australia’ (T.A. Fischer 11 Nov. 1992; P.J. Keating 19 Aug. 1993), and
- ‘good governance of a country’ (G. Campbell 25 Nov. 1993).

In these cases, where the generic use of ‘country’ is found, the subject is Australia. In another much smaller group of instances the subject of the term in question is a place other than Australia. Here the examples are: Fiji (R.J.L. Hawke 8 Dec. 1987), Hong Kong (H.G.P. Chapman 15 Oct. 1991), Tibet (D.J. Kerr 15 Oct. 1992), El Salvador (Petition 18 May 1993) and the United States (P.J. Keating 19 Aug. 1993). Some of these usages may be regarded as transitional in the sense that they may refer to either failed states or sub-state territories, in which case a substitute term for ‘government’ is desirable. Three instances which refer to Australian State governments (J.S. Dawkins 27 Sept. 1988; Senator P.H. Calvert 11 Apr. 1991; G.T. Johns 14 Oct. 1992) and two which refer to local government (M.J. Macklin 23 May 1988; Senator G.J. Evans 16 Dec. 1993) could also be regarded as transitional for the same reason.

Some of the instances of Gov#2 usage appear to relate specifically to the Constitution and to constitutionalism more generally. Thus, on 15 October 1990 Bob Hawke referred to the need, as he saw it, ‘to put this country into a better governance shape’ by reforming federalism. The other person to use ‘governance’ constitutionally was Senator Bronwyn Bishop, who used it in this way in all five instances where she used the term at all. Bishop referred to ‘our system of governance’ (5 March 1992; 5 Nov. 1992; 4 May 1993; 24 May 1993), and ‘the scheme of governance’ (28 May 1992), and another Senator (P.A. McLean 15 March 1988) asked whether delegated legislation is an ‘accepted means of governance’ in a context that clearly implied responsible government.

One special category in the appearance of Gov#2 meanings was the conception of ‘governance’ promoted by the World Bank in the late 1980s and early 1990s (World Bank 1992, 1989). This largely related to non-industrial countries in receipt of humanitarian aid, particularly that supplied by the World Bank, and the desire on the part of the Bank and likeminded financial institutions to make financial aid conditional on political adjustment measures. The ostensible aim was to eliminate corruption, but many of these “adjustment measures” brought about outcomes in which fundamental relations between governments and markets were realigned in ways that favoured market-based interests (De Alacántra, 1998; Keily 1998). This particular interpretation was to be found in seven instances during 1992 and 1993, almost invariably embodied in the phrase ‘good governance’ (Senator S. Spindler 10 Nov. 1992; Senator C.C. Schacht 8 Dec. 1992; M.J.R. MacKellar 17 Dec. 1992; Governor-General 4 May 1993; Senator R.M Hill 18 May 1993; Senator J.P Faulkner 27 May 1993; G.N. Bilney 6 Oct. 1993). These also post-dated the publication in 1992 of sixteen or so papers presented at “The Fourth International Workshop on Sustainable Economic Growth: Implications for Governance in the Asia-Pacific Region” held in Canberra in December 1991. While none of the participants discussed in any detail what ‘governance’ was understood to mean, this conference signalled an increasing presence of the use of term ‘governance’. One of those presenting papers at the this workshop was senior Labor politician John

Kerin, who until the day before the conference had been the Federal Treasurer and who later that month became Minister for Trade and Overseas Development. Earlier that year, in May 1991, Kerin used 'governance' in a speech about the Wool Secretariat, and as noted above that usage aligned with Gov#1 meaning. There is no indication that Kerin used 'governance' in parliamentary debates in the subsequent two years to the end of period in question.

There were two instances, Kelly in 1986 and Jenkins in 1988, which proved difficult to fit into the two simple classifications of Gov#1 and Gov#2. On 14 April 1986 Kelly asserted that '[w]hat we try to do in this legislation is to present a way of balancing the Commonwealth responsibility, plus the opportunity for the locally elected people to have a say not only in the management and governance of affairs that affect them but also in the planning of the capital.' The involvement of those affected in the management of bodies like Colleges is an idea which forms part of the Gov#1 usage literature, which can be easily traced back through the 1970s and early 1980s. Kelly was applying this to the larger entity of a Territory under the Commonwealth of Australia in which local government status is changing toward statehood. In this sense, the term can be regarded as transitional between a local government application which is close to the Gov#1 usage, and a sovereign state application which is novel. A similar situation applies to the statement by Democrats Senator JA Jenkins on 8 November 1988, that a proposed Bill on ACT self-government 'makes it easier for us to determine whether they [i.e. certain provisions] adequately reflect the standards the governance of the national capital requires, and the aspirations the Australian Parliament has for the Territory.' Here also there is slippage between local government as in 'the national capital' and the emerging Territory with claims to incipient Statehood, under a Constitution.

One final instance is worth mentioning briefly. On 22 January 1991 Andrew Theophanous made a statement to the House on the Middle East crisis which contained a passionate appeal for concerted international efforts to bring about peace and economic justice, in the course of which he asked 'whether there is to be a new international order in the governance of relations between nations.' The conduct of international relations can be compared with neither an autonomous body like a College, nor a sovereign state, but there are precedents for using the term in discussions of the international system. In international relations theory, the neorealist Robert Gilpin, in his discussion of the idea that states need to take the 'international system' into account in their calculations, refers to 'the governance of the system' as a relevant variable, which in the context was a means to avert any possibility of being misconstrued as implying world government (Gilpin 1981, 10).

Having mapped the occurrences of 'governance' within the parliamentary arena in this particular ten year period we would make a number of brief comments. First, it might be suggested that the instances of Gov#2 indicated a growing practice to treat 'governance' as a synonym for 'government', that it was merely a matter of synonymic substitution. Yet that does not explain why such a synonym was needed since the term 'government' did what was required, and had done so for a number of centuries (Fowler 1983, p. 230). A more likely possibility might be that the occasional uses of 'governance' as a synonym for 'government' was little more than a rhetorical strategy. That is, the use of 'governance' in the second sense might well have proved attractive because it enhanced the speaker's authority. 'Governance' is a word that sounds much

like 'government' (but not quite) and might even be assumed by its users to mean much the same thing. In short the substitution may have been homonymic with an emphasis on the sound of the word, perhaps with the aim of lending an air of *gravitas* to the speaker's meaning. Thus the choice of terms may suggest not so much a need to use a synonym but rather the substitution was merely a rhetorical strategy aimed at inflating the importance of the speaker's comments. If so, the issue of meaning would not have been paramount; rather the aim was the effect of the word in its utterance. Another reason why a speaker might use a word oddly can be discovered if we look at the situation through the medium of semiotics. Taking up Peirce's celebrated three types of sign (1960, 143), we could argue that 'governance' is symbolic only in the minimal sense needed for it to function in a meaningful sentence, and that its iconic aspect (where it might convey a visual image of a company boardroom for instance) is beyond the scope of our study, but that its indexical aspect is of interest. In using it as an indexical sign, the users would be identifying themselves with that sign, and communicating to the world the message 'I am in the club of persons who use governance instead of government.' In other words they may be using it as a badge.

Alternatively, as was suggested by one of the anonymous reviewers of this paper, this substitution might reflect a conceptual change similar to that mapped by Skinner who argued that towards the end of the Renaissance period the meaning of the concept of the state was being extended to cover the institutions of governing such that it was an abstraction from both the political regime (or person of the ruler) and the means to maintain and enforce any political regime (or ruler's authority), in effect a double abstraction. Thus, in the early 1990s the extension of the term 'governance' to embrace what we have hitherto understood as 'government' was an example of the sort of distinction discussed by Skinner. While there is certainly a sense in which the conceptual change indicated by the shift in meanings from Gov#1 to Gov#2 can be said to parallel the type of conceptual change mapped by Skinner the parliamentary usage differs. The principal problem is that Skinner's discussion was about the development of a term that came to be the pre-eminent one for denoting sovereign authority. In the parliamentary context at this time those using it were not necessarily extending the meaning of 'governance' to that level. They were certainly substituting 'governance' for 'government', however the latter was understood not necessarily as sovereign authority or even institutions, but more in terms of the *exercise* of that authority. Thus we are not convinced that such an explanation really captures this particular conceptual change in Australian political discourse.

The application of a term which had previously been applied exclusively to structures other than the state, to the state itself, could be seen as a fairly major shift, whereas the slippage from being a homonym for 'government' to something less than 'government' traditionally understood, comprises a shift within narrower limits. Regrettably, the use of 'governance' instead of 'government' within Australian parliamentary discourse in the late 1980s does not provide us with enough contextual evidence to say whether the latter shift in meaning accompanied the former one. While it is possible that politicians like Fischer or Hawke did indeed mean something less than 'government' in the ordinary sense, and that they *were* using 'governance' to downplay the role of the state in the wake of Thatcherism, they have left us no hints. There is nothing in the contexts which precludes a simpler explanation – that they used a more technical-sounding word in order to appropriate the aura of the expert professional in relation to administrative matters. Such an explanation may help us to understand the precocity of the 1984/85

usage instances. But equally the data is insufficient to conclude that the choice of terminology was deliberately aimed at conveying a distinctly different meaning. Indeed, the existence of parallel usages, over a number of years, suggests that the politicians never questioned any possible ambiguity or that there was any need to distinguish between the two meanings, noting however that there are no cases of the same politician using it both ways.

By way of a conclusion, we would note that studying the way in which certain terms are used readily demonstrates the mutability of meaning, as Ludwig Wittgenstein famously observed in *Culture and Value*, noticing that the happy connotations of 'festivity', 'wit', and 'humour' were entirely lacking in earlier times (cited in Ball 1988, 6). As well as such large conceptual shifts as 'humour', meaning change within a narrower range has been studied for such political keywords as 'constitution', 'democracy', 'the state', 'party', 'citizen', 'ideology' and others (Ball *et al.* 1989). More recently, 'governance' has attracted serious scrutiny from numerous scholars (eg Kooiman 1993; Rhodes 1997; Stoker 1998; Pierre & Peters 2000). However, this scrutiny has been concerned largely with framing and analysing the practices that 'governance' is supposed to mark out. And while one might argue that this is itself concerned with the problem of conceptual change, it presupposes a problematic different from the one that informs this paper's understanding of conceptual change. Noting that there has been a conceptual change and then setting out to explain the new conceptual usages and meanings is one thing, it is quite another to explain how that change actually comes about.

The fact that not one of the utterances of the substituted form of the term was accompanied by any explanation, however perfunctory, justifying such novel usage, confirms *a fortiori* Watson's allegation that this term and many others like it may well have been deployed 'to hide truth and slew or complicate meaning' in a manner inconsistent with deliberative democracy (Watson 2004, 2). Since the 1980s bequeathed to us so many of these 'weasel words', in a process whereby political speech was 'poisoned' by the smuggling of arcane managerial language into mainstream public discourse (Watson 2004, 2-3 *et passim*), we are entitled to suspect that both shifts in meaning did occur in tandem, even though the use of 'governance' in this way need not have been premeditated. Finally, one last observation is worth making. The sense of 'governance' that became dominant after about 1993, in particular as articulated in the World Bank publications, was only latent in the shift that we have documented; only seven instances could be said to resonate with this meaning. Looking back from 2007 it might seem self-evident that this third (and now pervasively dominant) meaning emerged out of the 'governance' family of meanings, yet thus far there is insufficient evidence to support this. The dynamics that underlie this conceptual change remain to be more precisely identified and explained.

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