Representative democracy is a chain of delegations

Selection of leaders → Formulation of policy → Implementation of policy

Citizen preferences → Selection of leaders
Representative democracy is a chain of delegations (2)  
[We will assume it works just fine]
But there is more than one type of representative democracy

Institutional engineering is as old as democracy (e.g., confiscations in Athens)

Most analyses of “institutions” focus on a few basic constitutional arrangements
- Electoral rules
- Presidentialism vs. parliamentarism
- [Unitarism vs. federalism]
- Interest group representation
- Others

Key themes
1. Tradeoffs
2. Interactions
   - with one another
   - with corollary institutions
   - with social structure
   - possibility of an oops (e.g., Fiji)
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   • possibility of an oops (e.g., Fiji)
**Presidentialism versus parliamentarism**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chief executive is chosen by legislature?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>[Finland]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td><strong>Presidentialism</strong> (with some variations in power)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Chief executive is easily removable by legislature?**
  - No
  - Yes
But presidents can have very different powers

Unitary or plural

Method of selection

Method of removal once selected (none, supermajority / for cause, majority)

Term in office (long or short; re-electable or not?)

Legislative power
  • Introduce legislation; expedited or not
  • Quasi-legislative / rule-making power; introducing legislation
  • Veto (with or without override)

Budgeting (line-item veto with or without substitution, impoundment, designing budget,)

State of siege (with legislative consent? override?)

Dissolve or convene legislature? (under what conditions?)

Appointments (how many, with legislative approval)

CINC

Pardon (absolute or not)

Ceremonial / head of state functions

Perks, travel, etc.

Contrast: Brazil vs. Costa Rica vs. President of the Helvetian Confederation
### Executives can have very different powers (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power</th>
<th>U.S. president</th>
<th>Governor of Texas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unitary or plural</td>
<td>Unitary</td>
<td>Plural (Lt. Governor, AG, Comptroller…)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of selection</td>
<td>Indirect election, majority</td>
<td>Direct election, FPTP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of removal</td>
<td>For cause, supermajority</td>
<td>For cause, supermajority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term in office</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Years</td>
<td>Once</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Re-electable?</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legislative power</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Introduce leg.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not formally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rule-making</td>
<td>Rule-making</td>
<td>Limited rule-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Veto</td>
<td>Qualified</td>
<td>Qualified, line item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeting</td>
<td>Significant formal &amp; informal</td>
<td>Emergency transfers only; (LBB dominant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of emergency</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes; can dispatch Texas Guard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissolve legislature?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointments</td>
<td>Many, some conditional</td>
<td>Judges elected, plural executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CINC</td>
<td>Yes; some law enforcement</td>
<td>Yes, some limited policing powers also</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardon</td>
<td>Absolute</td>
<td>Limited clemency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceremonial functions</td>
<td>All</td>
<td>Most except Secretary of State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel, perks, etc.</td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
<td>Salary rather low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consequences and tradeoffs

Between parliamentarian and presidentialism, which is better at…?

- Passing laws
- Fighting a war
- Promoting economic growth
- Controlling an epidemic
- Reducing ethnic tensions
- Representing minority opinions
- Maximizing system legitimacy
- Preserving democracy
Electoral rules: Basic division

1. Vote for a person who represents a single geographic area (a “district” or “constituency”); single-member district (SMD)

2. Vote for a party (which may represent an ideology); multimember districts with proportional representation (PR)
Electoral rules: More nuanced division

1
Vote for a person who represents a single geographic area (a “district” or “constituency”); single-member district (SMD)

First-past-the-post (FPTP), a.k.a., plurality-winner (e.g., US, UK)

Preferential voting (e.g., Australia, Maine, ballot question in MA last year)

2
Vote for a party (which may represent an ideology); multimember districts with proportional representation

Closed-list PR (no choice about individual candidates)

Open-list PR (choice about candidates within the party)
### Electoral rules: Sample ballots for fictional country of Acirema

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FPTP</th>
<th>Preferential voting</th>
<th>Closed-list PR (District mag. = 3)</th>
<th>Open-list PR (District magnitude = 3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vote for one</strong></td>
<td>Rank the following</td>
<td><strong>Vote for one</strong></td>
<td><strong>Circle one name, rank, etc.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bubba Smith Wesson</td>
<td>Bubba Smith Wesson (Homeland Party)</td>
<td>Homeland Party</td>
<td>Homeland Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Homeland Party)</td>
<td>Jezebel Cosmopolitano (Progressive Party)</td>
<td>Family Party</td>
<td>Family Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jezebel Cosmopolitano</td>
<td>Betty Baker (Family Party)</td>
<td>Progressive Party</td>
<td>Progressive Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bruno Jimenez</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Homeland Party photo. Image courtesy of James Walsh on Flickr. License CC BY-NC.
Family Party image. © Clipartix.com. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see [https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/](https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/).
Democratic Socialist Party image. © Socialist Party U.S.A. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see [https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/](https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/).
What if district magnitude was very large?  
(e.g., roughly size of Texas, or 30 seats)

Answer: There would be lots of parties representing slices of the electorate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labor Party</th>
<th>States’ Rights Party</th>
<th>La Raza Party</th>
<th>Green Party</th>
<th>Salvation Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmers’ Party</td>
<td>Black Power Party</td>
<td>Women’s Party</td>
<td>Second Amendment Party</td>
<td>Selfie Generation Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deseret Party</td>
<td>Libertarian Party</td>
<td>Enterprise Party</td>
<td>Old Fogey Party</td>
<td>Educators’ Party</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Main effects of electoral rules?

Number of parties

Partisan gerrymandering and disproportionality

Community representation, constituency service, pork-barreling, etc.

Party discipline in the legislature

Candidate-specific voting, “competence” versus party

Representing multiple voices

What institutions do new democracies adopt?
Translation of seats to votes in India’s Lok Sabha

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Election</th>
<th>Votes (%)</th>
<th>Seats (%)</th>
<th>Disproportionality (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Single-member districts
are much easier to gerrymander

The original gerrymander:
Elbridge Gerry (pronounced “Gary”) district, 1812
(And this tendency hasn’t gone away...)

The original gerrymander: Elbridge Gerry (pronounced “Gary”) district, 1812

Recent MA-7
Single member districts are much easier to gerrymander (2)

Texas, 2001

Texas, 2003
My personal favorite: MD-3
But there is more that one type of representative democracy

Institutional engineering is as old as democracy (e.g., confiscations in Athens)

Most analyses of “institutions” focus on a few basic constitutional arrangements
• Electoral rules
• Presidentialism vs. parliamentarism
• [Unitarism vs. federalism]
• **Interest group representation**
• Others
Interest Group Representation

**Corporatism**: All unions and all employer groups fall into “peak associations”

**The Government**
(Ministry of Industry / Ministry of Finance / Ministry of Labor)

Annual negotiation to set wage increases

- National Chamber of Commerce
- National Federation of Trade Unions
- National Steelworkers Union
- National Autoworkers Union
- Brotherhood of railway workers
- Textile workers Association
- Automobile Manufacturers Association
- National Chamber of Commerce

**Pluralism**: Each interest group directly lobbies the government

- Congress
- National Steelworkers Union
- National Autoworkers Union
- Auto firm
- Chamber of Commerce

Some sample issues: controlling inflation, managing class conflict, consumer rights, and environmental policy, etc.
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Most analyses of “institutions” focus on a few basic constitutional arrangements
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• Others
Other institutional design choices

Various institutions of direct democracy

Management of elections
• Counting ballots
• Campaign finance
• Media time
• Vetting of ads, misinformation

Lobbying (blue dollar system?)

Representing multiple issue dimensions

Internal party democracy

Constitutional interpretation

Descriptive and other representation
• Occupational categories (Slovenian National Council)
• Set asides + quotas (scheduled castes and tribes, women, minorities, etc.)

Compulsory voting
Theme: Interactions

Interactions

- with one another (example: veto players)
- with corollary institutions (example: presidentialism and number of parties)
- with social structure

Possibility of an oops

- Example: Preferential voting in Fiji
There are many different combinations of electoral rules and executive-legislative relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parliamentary</th>
<th>PR</th>
<th>Most of Continental Europe</th>
<th>[Current consensus]</th>
<th>The UK and most of its former colonies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presidential</td>
<td>FPTP</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>Oddities (including the USA)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are many different combinations of electoral rules and executive-legislative relations.

Parliamentary

Presidential

New Zealand (until 1996):
Too few checks?

BRAZIL:
Too many checks?

PR

SMD
Theme: Interactions

Interactions
- with one another (number of veto players)
- with corollary institutions (example: media, $, and number of parties)
- with social structure

What if there is an cross-cutting cleavage? (e.g., ethnicity or region)
What if electorate is not normally distributed?

Restricts number of parties
Theme: Interactions

Interactions

**Possibility of an oops**
- Example: Preferential voting in Fiji

```
Ethnic cleansing  Ethnic Fijian chauvinism  Pro-Indian party  Indian chauvinism
```

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pro-gov’t</th>
<th>Ethnic Fijian chauvinism</th>
<th>Pro-Indian party</th>
<th>Indian chauvinism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>Ethnic cleansing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```
Some consensus on “bad” institutions

1. DSV: Uruguay, 1970

José María Bordaberry wins, *autogolpe* follows

Left

Right

2. Hyper-presidentialism

- President
- Decrees
- Chancellor
- Prime Minister
- Parliament (Reichstag, Duma)
- Cabinet

- Laws

3. Presidential selection

President and VP on separate tickets
- U.S. 1800
- Philippines (Corazón Aquino)
- Peru (Alberto Fujimori)

President, PM on a different schedule

4. Excessive veto players

a. Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 1652-1791 (1764)

b. Plurality-winner presidential elections in multiparty system

c. Committee structures