

POL 104

Chapter Seven

POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS II:
INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Making Distinctions Between Political System

- **Taxonomic analysis:** Selected criteria to classify political systems
- Taxonomy reduces complexities, facilitates comparative analysis and helps to develop generalizations
- Taxonomies vary depending on the researcher and the nature of the work.

In order to study political systems or do political analysis we must find criteria by which to do so..

Examples:

- a) Political culture (level of dissent or obedience)
- b) Political structure (unitary/federal)
- c) Party system
- d) Regime type (democracy, autocracy, theocracy, monarchy or a mix of types)
- e) Levels of economic development
- f) Geographic location
- g) Land mass
- h) Demographics

Can you make distinctions between these countries?

- Italy Canada India Libya France UK
- Azerbaijan Tunisia Chile Greece Cambodia
- Poland Brazil Turkey Russia Nigeria Kenya
- Iran China Bulgaria

Democracies and Non democracies

- The official name of North Korea is The Democratic People's Republic of Korea
- SriLanka call itself the 'Democratis Socialist Republic'
- Iran, France, Kenya, and Egypt consider themselves democracies
- Are all of these democracies? How would you label them?

Perspectives on Democracy

PLATO (Greek philosopher, 427-347) defines democracy as a political system where ordinary people rule themselves without law. Every person has equal rights whether they are equal or not. Plato believes that ordinary people cannot make good decisions. For this reason democracy always leads to chaos and anarchy.

H. L. MENCKEN (Journalist) defines democracy as a theory that the common people know what they want, and deserve to get it good and hard.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN (US president) defines democracy as a political system where rulers come to power with the consent of people.

G. BERNARD SHAW (Writer) defines democracy as a corrupt political system by few who are elected by ordinary-unskilled people.

Winston Churchill (UK Prime Minister) Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time

Typology of Democratic systems

- Direct (Participatory)
- Representative
- Electoral
- Liberal

Direct (Participatory) democracy:

DEMOS+KRATIA= Rule of people by people for people

- Active, direct participation by all citizens in the authoritative allocation of values.
- All members of society vote equally on all issues
- Is there a real direct democracy in the world? Has there ever been?
- Challenges of Direct Democracy. Is it possible?

Representative Democracy

- Citizens elect a group of individuals to represent them in the political process and to govern on their behalf
- ‘Republic’ is another term used to describe a representative democracy.
- Is Kuwait a representative democracy?
- ---- In Kuwait, citizens elect representatives
- ---- about half of its resident adult population (those who cannot trace their Kuwaiti ancestry to 1920) are not allowed to vote in legislative elections
- the chief executive, the Emir is appointed from the ruling Al-Sabah family

Electoral Democracy

- Universal suffrage (all citizens, with some restrictions, age or legal status, have the right to vote).
- Is this sufficient to qualify as a democracy?
(single party systems)
- Competitive election. The existence of more than one choice for governmental offices.
- Limited mandate. Once elected political leaders are subject to term limits and regular elections.

Liberal Democracy

- Citizens not only benefit from the right to vote but also rights and civil liberties regarding participation, personal freedoms, opposition and freedom of speech and the press.
- Some scholars include additional elements such as an independent and neutral judiciary and civilian control of the military.

- Are quality education, employment, healthcare, housing, healthy environment, and personal safety conditions upon which democracies should be judged?
- Should public officials in democracies be accountable and responsive to the preferences of citizens?

Electoral System

- -A framework by which citizens vote for members of the legislature and other government officials such as president or prime minister.
- When there is an election for a single office, such as the president or a regional chief executive, it is easy to determine the winner. The winner is usually the candidate who garners the largest number of votes.
- But in some political systems the winner is required to receive the majority vote to be elected. In this case if no candidates receives a majority in the first round, there is a runoff election between the two candidates who garnered the largest number of votes in the first round.

Characteristics of an electoral system:

- * How many representatives will be elected from each district?
- It is possible to elect 1 member from each district (as in the US House of Representatives).
- Many political systems have more than one representative per district, depending on the population of the district.
- But some political systems treat the entire country as one electoral district (the Netherlands and Israel).

How are votes converted into representative seats?

- **1-Electoral Plurality (Single Member District Representation System):**
 - one member is elected in the district
 - each voter casts a vote for a specific candidate
- - the candidate with largest number of votes wins the election.

2- Proportional Representation:

- multimember districts
- proportionality

3- Mixed-member Proportional Representation

(Examples: Italy, Japan, Russia)

- An increasing number of states have attempted to combine plurality and proportional systems in a mixed system

4- Preferential Voting System:

(Example:Australia)

-voters rank candidates in the order of preference. Then the votes for the candidate with the lowest total are redistributed to those voters' second choice and so on until a majority candidate appears.

5. Approving System

- Some scholars have argued that the best electoral system is one in which the voters can vote for as many of the candidates as they find acceptable.

Converting votes to elected officials: number of representatives elected per district in each system

	Percentages of Vote %	Plurality	PR	Preferential	Approval
Party A	31	1	6	0 (38%)	0 (46%)
Party B	15	0	3	0 (0%)	1 (75%)
Party C	29	0	6	1 (61%)	0 (69%)
Party D	25	0	5	0 (0%)	0 (54%)

Typology of Non-democracies

- **1- Dictatorship:**
- Form of political system where the ruler has absolute power and authority. (Arbitrariness is a norm in the political process)
- A political system where the citizens cannot remove the political ruler from office. (absence of a limited mandate)
- An unpopular ruler or ruling group that has forced the population to accept its authority.

Authoritarianism

- - absence of a limited mandate.
- -What differentiates dictatorships and authoritarianism is that in the latter the population has few, if any, political rights. In other words the political actions and decisions of the ruler are not limited while the political rights and freedoms of the citizens are significantly limited.
- - the regime places severe limitations on the political activities of citizens and ensures compliance through security networks.

- the majority of people are not allowed to participate in any political activity.
- People cannot question the political institutions, procedures and decisions of the rulers.
- However nonpolitical aspects of people's lives such as religion, occupation and social life are not generally under the direct control of the political system.

Totalitarianism

- A system where the state penetrates all aspects of social life.
 - governs without consent.
 - extensive use of the agents of socialization especially the media and educational system.
 - prescription (dictation) and proscription (prohibition) of the individuals' behaviour and thoughts of population.

Constitutional and Non-Constitutional Regimes

- **Constitution:** a prescription for the fundamental rules and practices of a political system.
- * There are three crucial sets of rules in a constitution.
 - 1. allocates governmental activities, defining what actions are within the domain of *res publica*,
 - 2. establishes the formal power relationship among the political structures of the state,
 - 3. (in a democracy) limits the power of the rulers and guarantees the rights of the ruled.

- A constitution could be a single written document.
- But some political systems do not have such a document, where fundamental rules are included in major statutes, precedents and legal decisions like The UK unwritten constitution, or Israeli 'Basic Laws'
- * Early constitutions tended to be relatively short and generalized but some more recent constitutions are quite detailed

Constitutional Regime

- A political system where the rulers obey the laws of the state and the power of rulers is effectively restricted toward protecting individual rights and freedoms as defined in the constitution.
- - Limited government
- - Protection from arbitrary decisions of the state

Non Constitutional Regime

- Defined by a persistent non-enforcement of constitutional provisions, especially crucial limits on rulers or rights of the ruled.
- The absence of a constitution where people are governed by hereditary rulers, religious principles or traditions that guarantee no rights to the ruled

- leaders ignore the basic rules of the constitution,
 - the rule of law collapses because the social order disintegrates
 - either the entire constitution or major constitutional rights are suspended temporarily
- * Almost every political system occasionally violates or ignores some principle in its constitution. But a political system is understood as non-constitutional when there is persistent (continual) non-enforcement of crucial limits on rulers.
- Most authoritarian and totalitarian states are non-constitutional.

Areal (Territorial) Distribution of Power

The allocation of a state's power and functions across the levels (layers) of government.

- **Unitary state**: A condition where state authority is concentrated within the central (national) government.
- Sovereignty is indivisible but the central government can delegate power and functions to territorial units (departments, regions, prefectures)
- Hierarchical Authority: These powers can be removed,

Advantages and Disadvantages of the Unitary State

- There is a clear, hierarchical authority limiting center – periphery disputes
- The constitutional supremacy enables political control
- Citizens tend to identify themselves with the country rather than with regional jurisdictions.
- Hyperconcentration of power
- Weak representation of diversity and minorities

Federation

- A constitutional division of power and functions between a central government and a set of regional authorities (landers, cantons, states, provinces).
- No level of government has legal power to dominate any other level in all policy domains.
- There is coordination, not hierarchy between the central government and regional governments.

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Advantages and Disadvantages

- Representative of diversity
- Checks on central power
- Creates unity without destroying diversity
- Duplication and overlap of power
- Conflicts over ultimate power
- Often moves slowly due to compromise

Why Federalism

- Large size: It is difficult to govern a huge area from a single center. (about 25 states are federations but they include nearly half the land area of the world)
- Examples: (Brazil, Canada, India, Mexico, Nigeria Russia, USA)
- The prior existence of strong states:
- The desire to maintain unity or accommodate diversity. (India, Switzerland, Belgium,...)
- The desire to concentrate power and resources:
- A federation may be formed to combine several states into a stronger political system.
- The desire to disperse political power:
- Prevent the concentration of power in the central government.

Confederation

- Sovereignty belongs to the member states
- A loose grouping of sovereign states
- Facilitates political cooperation between states by creating common governing structures.
- Advantages:
 - Facilitates cooperation between independent states
 - Sub-units retain power
- Disadvantages:
 - Conditional compliance (harmony) between member states
 - instability and limited power

Executive/ Legislative Relations

- Political systems can be classified by defining interaction between the legislature and the executive.
- Presidential Government:(USA, Brazil, Kenya, Mexico)
- Separation of executive and legislative powers
 - Primary responsibility for policy making (debating, modifying and enacting policies as laws) resides in the legislature
- Citizens elect both the chief executive and the legislators. The chief executive is the head of government and head of state.

Checks and Balances

- The chief-executive (president) can veto legislative bills. But this veto can be overridden (in both Houses of Congress by 2/3 majority in USA).
- Legislature has absolute veto powers over presidential appointments, treaties and executive orders.
- The Supreme Court rulings can veto legislative or executive decisions deemed to be unconstitutional

- b. Vote of Confidence
 - - the cabinet is responsible to the legislature. Without the confidence of the majority in the legislature the cabinet can not serve this role.
- c. Motion (vote) of no-confidence. The majority can pressure the cabinet to resign with a negative vote. But the executive can dissolve the legislature, requiring immediate new elections.
- d. The cabinet is a collective leadership whose members are inside or outside the parliament
 - - Although the legislature is responsible for making laws, the cabinet is active in planning and drafting laws and implementing policies.

Parliamentary Government

- Fuses executive and legislative functions
- Majority party determines executive leader
- the prime minister is *primus inter pares* (*the first among equals*). The prime minister (premier, Chancellor) must be a member of the legislator.
- Stable parliamentary system (there is a clear majority in the legislature composed of either one party or coalition.
- Unstable parliamentary system: No clear majority party or coalition, forcing decisions to be made through multiple parties.

Hybrid Systems

- Combining some aspects of presidential and parliamentary systems, both a prime minister and an elected legislature enact and implement policies. There is also a president elected (by parliament or people) for a fixed term who performs some executive functions.
- The president has limited power and most control is exercised by the prime minister and cabinet. (Germany, Austria, Ireland)
- In other hybrid systems, there is a more balanced sharing of power between the prime minister and the president.

Council System

- A small group provides collective leadership, which is responsible for both executive and legislative functions. A particular member of the group may be the leader for symbolic reasons but all members are equal in constitutional terms.
- Many traditional tribal societies in Africa were ruled by a council of elders who collectively made decisions that were binding on the members of the tribe.
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Assembly System

- Collective leadership by a large group usually the legislature.
- There is a small group (executive council) elected by the legislature and this group performs executive functions but the legislature is clearly dominant
- Example: Switzerland

Party Systems

- Criteria used for this classification:
- 1) The number of the political parties
- 2) The interaction among the parties in the governing process

Two-Party System:

- Power rotates between them. Each party has a realistic possibility of forming a governing majority in the parliament.
- Significant third parties may exist but they have limited power to influence governing

- In some two-party system the two major parties have distinct ideologies (US)
- In other cases the two major parties represent similar ideological values and views on socio-political issues (Honduras)
- Two-party plus system in the UK the Labour and Conservative are the two major parties plus a significant third party, the Liberal Democrats.

Multi-Party System

- -There are more than two parties in power whose participation is essential in the formation and activities of governing.
- Most contemporary democratic systems have MPS.
- Examples of working (stable) multi-party systems (Sweden, Denmark)
- Various parties are willing to cooperate in a governing coalition
- Although there are ideological differences between parties they can come together in a coalition government.

Unstable Multi-Party Systems

- Differences in party ideology prevent the formation of coalitions majorities
- Cooperation is limited
- Ideological differences among parties usually lead to resignations or the dissolution of the legislature.
- In presidential systems this situation tends to produce paralysis (immobilization) in the legislature
- Examples: Israel Mexico

• Dominant Party System

- The same party consistently gains a sufficient number of seats in the parliament to stay in power for long periods of time.
- Other parties are allowed to exist and participate in elections but have limited influence.
- In some cases a dominant party loses support and becomes a competitor in a multi party system.
- Examples: Peoples Action Party in Singapore, Congress Party in India

One Party System

- There is a single party which is the only legal political party in the system.
- The state usually does not allow other parties or opposition groups to exist (Burma, Cuba, North Korea).
- In some states where democracy is not institutionalized, multi-party systems are reduced to one party systems.
- In some one-party systems electoral competition between candidates is permitted (Cuba, China).

No Party System

There is no organized party and the governmental power is in the hands of a royal family or of the military.

- Examples: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia