



Chapter 6: The Executive

POLS 2000

9/13/19

Prof. Anthony Madonna

ajmadonn@uga.edu

Choosing Institutions: Connect Your Government

- There are essentially three systems through which the relationship can be ordered; the unitary system, the federal system, and the confederal system.
- Most nations don't *choose* to have one or the other.
- The makeup of the nation, its history, its culture, and its geography tends to determine the type of structure.
- A *unitary system* is one where sovereignty rests quite clearly on the shoulders of the national government.
- Laws apply to everyone regardless of where they live in the country, everyone shares all governmental benefits equally, and there is no redundancy in services.
- The central national government may allow some local governing boards to have a say.
- The ability to make these decisions is at the mercy of the national government



Choosing Institutions: Connect Your Government



- Systems where the final authority for at least some aspects of government is left to the local or subnational level are called federal systems.
- In a *federal system* sovereignty is, at least theoretically, shared between the national and the local government units.
- Federal systems work well in diverse countries, where variations in local conditions, economies, or cultures make it impractical or inefficient to try to impose a single system, or make it difficult to make decisions from a central location.

Choosing Institutions: Connect Your Government



- The least commonly used form is the confederal system.
- In a confederal system the local government units that have the real power; they have sovereignty.
- The key to the confederal system is that the individual units within it can defy the national or galactic level of government.
- They can even leave the system at any time they wish.
- Because the national government must maintain the continued willingness of all local units to be a part of the confederation, every single local unit effectively has the power to veto any national level policy.

Choosing Institutions: Connect Your Government

Unitary systems also have their benefits.

In unitary systems the governmental structure is much easier to understand.

Citizens do not have to worry about who is responsible for carrying out policies.

Furthermore, they do not have to worry about elections for multiple offices.

Every citizen in the country is entitled to the same rights and benefits.

Unitary systems make it easier to maintain a sense of national identity.

Unitary systems tend to run more smoothly because policy is easier to implement and less effort is spent sorting out who should do what.

Regulatory consistency across a larger entity also has economic benefits, since one product can be sold across the whole nation and efficiencies of scale can be more easily capitalized upon.



News



CNN - The top 10 Democratic candidates shared a single debate stage for the first time in the 2020 race, trading body blows while drawing stark contrasts on issues like health care and criminal justice reform.

"Chief Justice John Roberts cast the deciding vote against President Trump's attempt to add a citizenship question to the 2020 census, but only after changing his position behind the scenes," sources familiar with the private Supreme Court deliberations tell CNN. "More broadly, his moves in the census dispute demonstrate that as he begins his 15th year as chief justice, Roberts has become less predictable. He is wearing the heavy mantle of a vote at the middle of a divided bench in this new chapter of his tenure, with the 2018 retirement of centrist-conservative Justice Anthony Kennedy and a solid 5-4 conservative majority."



"House Appropriations Committee Chair Nita Lowey (D-NY) is proposing to block the White House request over its farm bailout program, potentially imperiling President Trump's ability to direct payments to thousands of farmers," the Washington Post reports. "The bailout program was created last year amid complaints from agriculture groups that China had stopped purchasing their crops in retaliation for new tariffs that the White House imposed on Chinese imports. Trump has ordered that billions of dollars in taxpayer funds be paid directly to farmers as a way to offset their losses." "The bailout hadn't needed congressional approval up to this point, but that has changed."

- On Monday, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Murphy v. National Collegiate Athletic Association* that the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act violated the 10th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. This ruling has led both sports fans and entrepreneurs to wonder about the future of sports betting in the United States. Here is an attempt to answer some of the more frequent questions about the impact of Monday's ruling.



Executives



- In a presidential system it is very easy to identify the chief executive.
- The U.S. president plays two roles, head of state and head of government, a ceremonial and a functional role.
- In many, if not most, other democracies, however, these two fundamental roles of the executive are split up and spread around.

Head of State

- The role as head of state involves serving as the national symbol, the personification of the country and its people.
- Heads of state can take different forms in different countries.
- The head of state can be a monarch, an elected president, or the person with the most troops.
- In some countries the head of state will be a king or queen or even the king or queen of another country altogether.
- In parliamentary systems that lack a monarch, there is usually an elected president.
- These presidents can be either elected directly or they might be chosen by the parliament for the position.



Head of State



- Not all heads of state are created equal.
- Dictators and strong monarchs may be heads of state with weak or powerless legislatures.
- Less powerful monarchs (like those in Western Europe) are mere figureheads working within constitutional monarchies, where the parliament has all of the real political power.
- Among presidents in parliamentary systems, there is a great deal of variety in the amount of power wielded depending on the nation's political structure.

Head of Government



- If the head of state is the public face we see on advertisements, the head of government is the manager that actually handles the day-to-day work.
- In parliamentary democracies the head of government is usually the prime minister.
- The prime minister is responsible for, among other things:
 - getting bills passed through the parliament
 - overseeing the running of the bureaucracy
 - dealing with disasters
 - commanding the military
 - Holding adorable kittens (Canadian PM only)

Head of Government

- Prime ministers can only stay prime ministers as long as they maintains the support of a majority in the parliament.
- One becomes the prime minister by being the head of the party that wins a majority of seats in parliamentary elections.
- If no party wins a clear majority, the head of state usually asks the head of the party that that won the most seats to try to form a coalition with one or more of the other parties that won seats.
- A potential prime minister must try and make some deals to bring a coalition together that includes more than half of the members of parliament.



Head of Government



- It is technically true that the prime minister is nothing more than the first minister.
- Parliamentary governments are actually made up of many ministers that form the cabinet.
- Other ministers may include the foreign minister, treasury minister, defense minister, etc.
- In an effort to form a government a potential minister may offer other parties a chance to have one of their members serve as a minister in exchange for joining and supporting the overall coalition.
- Once a majority coalition is constructed, however, the new prime minister also has a governing coalition, which is expected to pass laws.

Head of Government

- One advantage of executives in most presidential systems is that they are both the head of government and the head of state.
- That puts a lot of political power in the hands of one individual.
- The executives in presidential systems are usually selected directly by the people, although there can be variations.
- In most democracies, the chief executive is the civilian head of the military.
- These executives are also usually responsible for foreign relations.



Head of Government



- Heads of government oversee much of the government's bureaucracy, make sure that government services are provided, and implement and enforce laws.
- The chief executive is also expected to make certain that laws get passed through the legislature.
- Prime ministers formulate a legislative agenda and attempt to shepherd that agenda through the parliament.
- Presidents have a more difficult time because of the separation of powers.
- In most democracies, people expect the chief executive to effectively manage the nation's economy.
- Chief executives are also the heads of their parties; they have purely political roles.

The Bureaucracy

- The word bureaucracy is derived from the French word for desk.
- Its adoption as a political term reflects the idea that it is the position within the administrative political structure, not the person behind it, that defines the role or function to be performed.
- In other words, the role was defined separate from the person performing it.
- Bureaucracies serve many functions; they regulate, license, procure, distribute, observe, preserve, encourage, police, study, and manage.
- In the United States, the Postal Service (USPS) delivers the mail, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) gathers revenue, the National Science Foundation (NSF) funds research proposals, the Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) police the borders, etc..
- The simple truth is that the vast majority of what governments do is done by bureaucracies. This is true regardless of the form government takes (democracy, theocracy, monarchy, or whatever).



Do We Really Want Bureaucracies?



- No.
- But, bureaucracies are indispensable.
- Bureaucracies take on functions that would waste the time and effort of elected and unelected leaders.
- Bureaucracies do pretty much everything that actually gets done by government.

The Ideals of Bureaucratic Governance



"Only he has the calling for politics who is sure that he will not crumble when the world from his point of view is too stupid or base for what he wants to offer." – Max Weber

- The German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) recognized that modern nation-states needed professional bureaucracies.
- He argued that the ideal bureaucracy should be efficient and rational.
- It should function like a machine, with each of its parts playing a well-defined role.
- Weber argued that there were a few critical elements for achieving this ideal:
 - Clear assignment of roles: In order to fit together and function in unison, each of the parts in the bureaucratic machine must know both what it is supposed to do and how it fits within the larger organization.
 - Rules, Rules, Rules, and More Rules: For both efficiency and fairness, decisions and choices made by bureaucrats need to be impersonal and consistent.

The Ideals of Bureaucratic Governance

- Hierarchy: bureaucracies are strictly hierarchical, each person should have only one immediate supervisor, and each supervisor should have only a limited number of subordinates.



- Professionals: Most importantly, the selection of persons to fill roles within the bureaucracy, must be done on the basis of merit.

*Peter: And here's something else, Bob I have eight different bosses right now.
Bob: I beg your pardon?
Peter: Eight bosses.
Bob: Eight?
Peter: Eight, Bob. So that means that when I make a mistake, I have eight different people coming by to tell me about it. That's my only real motivation is not to be hassled, that and the fear of losing my job. But you know, Bob, that will only make someone work just hard enough not to get fired.*

Policymaking versus Administration

- As bureaucracies grew in size and number, there has been constant concern that they might assume the roles meant for elected officials.
- People feared that they would move from implementing laws to actually making the laws.
- This would be particularly disturbing because they were not designed to be responsive to the people.



The only thing that saves us from the bureaucracy is inefficiency. - Sen. Eugene McCarthy (D-MN)

Policymaking versus Administration



"I bet I can eat that entire burrito." - President Woodrow Wilson

- Woodrow Wilson wrote an essay declaring that there should be a strict dichotomy between politics and administration.
- Frank Goodnow picked up this theme and argued that there should be a sharp distinction between the political branches making the laws and the bureaucracy implementing them.
- In reality completely severing politics from administration would be a disaster for democracy.

Bureaucratic Roles

- Bureaucracies are involved in service, regulation, implementation, and policymaking.
- Governments provide many services; they run hospitals, carry out welfare programs, run public schools, operate parks, etc.
- Administrative agencies also regulate; The FBI regulates personal behavior, the Food and Drug Administration regulates medicine, the Securities and Exchange Commission tries to regulate Wall Street, etc.
- Agencies are also primarily responsible for implementation; they make sure that the laws that legislatures pass get put into place.
- The bureaucracy is also responsible for making public policy; legislatures often pass laws that are general, and they will leave the specifics to the expertise of bureaucracies.



Bugs in the Machine



- In real life no institution runs perfectly.
- There will always be unintended consequences and something is bound to not go according to plans.
- Even institutions that have withstood the test of time can find themselves outdated or subject to intense criticism.
- Sometimes those problems will occur because:
 - People are looking for ways to maximize their own self-interest.
 - The world changes faster than political institutions.
 - Of flaws in the institutions themselves.
- There will always be problems with institutions.

Parliamentary versus Presidential Systems

- Presidential systems create strong and independent executives, while the parliamentary systems offer executives who can work very effectively with the legislative branch.
- Presidential systems maintain strong institutions through independence and parliamentary systems offer expediency and efficiency.
- Strength and independence are positive virtues, as are expediency and efficiency.
- However, it is possible to have too much of a good thing.



Parliamentary versus Presidential Systems



- A strong president may become too strong.
- Presidents can accumulate increased power at the expense of the legislative branch keeping checks and balances from working properly.
- After Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon accumulated tremendous power, historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., wrote a book called *The Imperial Presidency*.

Gridlock



- A more common problem in presidential systems is gridlock.
- Gridlock arises when checks and balances work so well they prevent anyone from doing much of anything.
- In the United States gridlock often accompanies divided government, where one political party controls the presidency and another party controls at least part of the legislature.
- One negative effects of gridlock is a difficulty in passing any kind of broad or comprehensive policy changes.
- The only way that anything gets done is with what might be called "the Bob solution."
- Because of the nature of the separation of powers and gridlock, in the United States, policy is often reduced to baby steps.

Gridlock



- Parliamentary systems are not subject to gridlock.
- The prime minister is a member of parliament and always commands the majority of votes in the legislature.
- A politician becomes prime minister by garnering the support of a majority of the parliament or by forming a coalition.
- In either situation, the prime minister pretty much always has a majority in parliament to provide the legislation needed to back policy and the majority in parliament can almost always count on the executive to support the legislation that is passed.

Parliaments and Instability

- There are two aspects of a parliamentary system that might be considered bugs in the system and both are related to stability.
- The first is policy stability.
- In a presidential system, where big changes are difficult to enact, the social and economic environments within the country tend to be very consistent over time.
- This has a tremendous value to businesses and others who need to be able to plan over the long term.
- In parliamentary systems change is far easier, and too much change can sometimes be a problem.
- A new party or new coalition coming in to power can change just about anything and everything.



Parliaments and Instability



- Another problem in parliamentary systems is in the tenure of the government itself.
- In most parliamentary systems the government can be dissolved at any moment by a simple majority vote.
- At any time, a party can call for a vote of no confidence.
- If the prime minister loses the vote, the government is dissolved and a new government must be formed.
- In some systems there might be a short window of time to negotiate a new coalition before an election is necessary, in other systems new elections are required immediately.
- This means that any scandal or any policy failure can lead to an immediate change of government.

Districts and Proportions: Not so Democratic Representation

- Many nations use a single member district system, where voting is based upon a geographic district.
- Other nations use a proportional system where seats in the legislature are assigned to parties based upon the proportion of the votes they receive.
- Both systems have advantages.
- A district system elects individuals who are responsible for representing specific community interests, and the threat of future elections makes representatives responsive to local needs.
- A proportional system allows for a much wider variety of political perspectives to be represented, and it ensures that almost everyone's perspective has a voice.
- In a district system, if you vote for any candidate that cannot win, your preferences will not be represented.
- However, both systems are flawed as a means of democratic representation.



Coalitions and Minority Governments



- Proportional representation causes a proliferation of political parties.
- A party can form around any policy position that attracts enough votes to get it past the qualifying threshold.
- Multiparty systems are an important part of a proportional representation system, and when there are many parties, it can be very difficult for any one party to achieve the necessary majority to form a government.
- Since a prime minister must always have the support of a majority of the parliament this usually leads to a coalition government.
- Coalitions are ad hoc agreements formed in order to win the executive, but they are always uneasy because each party has its own political agenda.

Coalitions and Minority Governments

- A problem with representation occurs when a minor party can swing the vote for or against a prime minister.
- These parties are often called relevant parties, i.e., even though they cannot win on their own, they can affect the outcome of the election.
- This gives them policy leverage far out of proportion to the votes they received.
- Typically, the proliferation of minor parties in a proportional system and the interests of the minor parties seldom coincide enough to make nice, rational coalitions.



Coalitions and Minority Governments



- While parliamentary systems do not suffer from gridlock, they can suffer from immobilism.
- The more complex and more fragile the ruling coalition, the more difficult it becomes to enact any policies.
- Any new policy that was not agreed upon by all parties at the formation of the coalition may cause force the government to collapse.
- Essentially, any party that can cause the coalition to fall apart has veto power over any legislation.
- Thus, multiparty systems enable governments to constantly teeter on the brink of falling apart.

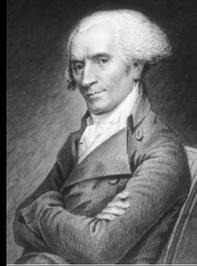
Coalitions and Minority Governments



- It is possible, but rare, for parliamentary systems to have a minority government, i.e., the majority party does not share power, but relies another party's promise of support in a no confidence vote.
- Another variation is a unity government where the two major parties, though in opposition, work together to achieve a higher national purpose.
- As one might imagine, such arrangements are difficult to maintain and are usually short-lived.
- France has a parliamentary system and a president with significant political power.
- France's president is elected separately and at different times from the parliament, but the prime minister serves at the president's pleasure.
- It is possible for the French president to be from one political party, while a different political party controls the legislature, which the French refer to as cohabitation.

District Elections

- In nations that use district elections, legislators are elected to represent a particular geographic territory.
- A big problem with district elections is that someone must draw the district lines.
- The party in power often is one responsible for drawing the lines.
- The process of intentionally drawing districts to gain a partisan advantage is called gerrymandering.
- Gerrymandering is particularly common in the United States.
- Other countries that use district elections have independent commissions that attempt to create fair election districts in a non-political manner.



Gerrymandering



Gerrymandering – Drawing a district so as to concentrate the opposition party's voters in a small number of districts that the party wins by large margins, thus "wasting" many of its votes, while creating as many districts as possible where one's own party has a secure, though not overwhelming, majority.

District Elections



- Another problem with electoral districts is that they split the loyalty of elected representatives.
- Voters ask their representatives to play two different and often contradictory roles
- They ask them to be part of the national lawmaking assembly; they are expected to enact legislation that is in the nation's best interest.
- Representatives are also expected to be ambassadors from the district they represent; constituents, the people they represent in their district, want them to do what is in the best interest for that district.
- What is in the best interest of a state or legislative district is not always the same as what is in the best interest of the nation as a whole.

District Elections

- These split roles can weaken political parties.
- Because each individual representative owes his or her electoral success to a constituency and not to a political party, representatives can feel freer to act contrary to party interests.
- This makes it much more difficult for party leaders to maintain party discipline.
- The split loyalty can also encourage legislators to engage in pork-barrel politics, where representatives use their political office to bring federal money to their districts through the form of projects and jobs.
- Also, contrary to the image that most people have of lawmakers who are engaged in important debates, much of the job is comprised of constituent service.



Bureaucracy, It Goes to Eleven



- Many of our frustrations with bureaucracies have less to do with their flaws, and more to do with their ideals of strict adherence to rule-based actions.
- Even scholars presume that political branches are incapable of controlling them.
- There is an ongoing debate over the fundamental compatibility of bureaucracy and democracy.
- Ideally, bureaucracies need to be able to adapt to changes, but that would conflict with the ideal of rule-based decision making.

Rules and Hierarchy versus Adaptation, Responsiveness, and Democracy

- Given Weber's insistence on hierarchy it would seem change must come from the top down.
- However, Anthony Downs' concept of authority leakage questions if it is possible for those at the top of the hierarchy to effectively direct the actions of those at the bottom.
- Even if everyone acts in good faith, the top officials attempts to control the bureaucracy gets distorted as each successive layer of the bureaucracy interprets the orders.
- Even if each of these alterations is minor, they multiply and accumulate and magnify one another as the order passes down through the levels within the bureaucracy.
- It becomes almost impossible for the top of the hierarchy to consistently and effectively direct the outputs at the bottom.

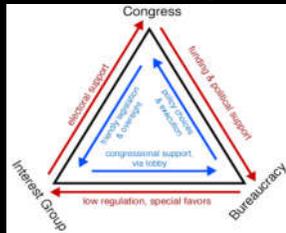


The Iron Triangle



- The most obvious way to integrate bureaucracies into a democratic system is to create a system of overhead democracy.
- In this system, elected officials are put at the top of the bureaucratic hierarchy.
- However, serious doubts has been cast over a top-down model of a democratic bureaucracy.
- One problem is Downs' authority leakage.
- Another problem is the iron triangle.

The Iron Triangle



- The same electoral dynamics expected to encourage responsiveness to the public create an imbalance of interests in the activities of the bureaucracies.
- This leads to agencies being "captured" by small interests group that are often those the bureaucracy is directed to regulate
- The executive and legislature typically have little interest in bureaucratic oversight. In contrast, the interest groups directly affected by the bureaucracy have a great deal of interest in it.

The Iron Triangle

- This means that agencies can be captured and redirected so that they focus on the needs of an interest group rather than the public interest.
- The result is an iron triangle formed by bureaucracies, interest groups, and elected officials.
- Lobbying encourages legislators to craft laws that reflect the interest groups' preferences.
- Interest groups provide resources such as cash or mobilized voters to support the reelection efforts of cooperative elected officials.
- Agencies that respond interest group concerns then receive rewards from elected officials like preferences in budgeting.
- This gives the bureaucracy a motive to listen to the interest group.



Agency Theory and the Responsive Bureaucracy

- Since its introduction in the 1950s, the iron triangle theory of bureaucracy has been the central conceptual theme among those who study bureaucracies.
- In the 1980s, political scientists borrowed from the study of economics and business the concept of agency theory.
- Agency theory, also known as the principal-agent model, is structured around the basic premise that bureaucracies are agents that act on behalf of the legislature in a relationship similar to a business contract.



Agency Theory and the Responsive Bureaucracy

- Under the model, bureaucracies are essentially hired by the legislature to perform certain functions.
- The relationship is clearly hierarchical; the bureaucracy treats elected officials like customers.
- The principal-agent model requires little if any direct monitoring by elected officials.
- If elected officials see unsatisfactory output, they can complain, hold hearings, or threaten the budget of the bureaucracy, the tenure of upper-level officials or even the very existence of the bureaucracy.
- The elected officials do not have to watch every minute, they just have to monitor the results and keep an eye out for something to go wrong.
- Research shows that bureaucracies clearly do adjust, incrementally at least, to the will of elected leaders.

The Cockroach Theory of Bureaucracy



- Bureaucracies constantly struggle for limited funds within the government budget.
- Bureaucracies and their officials realize that if they fail they face the prospect of being substantially sanctioned.
- The entire bureaucracy could be eliminated by the public officials responsible for budgeting and oversight or, more realistically, they will might receive a budget cut.
- The tenure of the bureaucracy's leaders may be threatened.
- These potential punishments motivate bureaucracies and bureaucrats to adjust to the demands and dynamics of domestic politics.

The Cockroach Theory of Bureaucracy

- Bureaucracies try to avoid harsh negative sanctions by adjusting their actions in accordance with the same cues that elected officials use.
- In modern democracies, the news media provide the most prominent sources of political cues and together they provide an easy, inexpensive way to monitor the domestic political environment.
- High levels of coverage of an issue indicate that it is important, or will be important.
- An easy way for bureaucrats to try to get their job right and avoid negative attention and critical scrutiny of their operations is to react to the news media's indicators of public demand.
- In essence, bureaucrats try to avoid negative publicity.



The Cockroach Theory of Bureaucracy



- Like the cockroaches, the bureaucracy that finds itself caught out in the light is the one that is going to be stomped on.
- Thus, an effective strategy that both bureaucracies and roaches can use to thrive and survive is to avoid attention, to actively avoid the light.
- For bureaucracies, the cockroach theory of bureaucracy is focused on the glaring spotlight of a media that is driven to seek out government failures and scandals.
- Thus, bureaucracies serve the public as best as they can and hope to stay hidden and well fed in the darker recesses of an anonymous bureaucratic government.

Conclusion



Questions? Concerns? Angry Rants?
