

Our next unit is on institutions, “the rules and procedures that structure social interaction by constraining and enabling actors’ behavior.”

We can think of institutions as constraints that structure political and economic interactions. Often we think of state institutions as semi-autonomous entities that structure societal conflict. E.g. Labor movements took on different worldviews in Britain and the United States because in Britain one movement was attached to a party and the other was not. But institutions are also influenced by social forces (some would say they are ultimately endogenous).

And we can think of institutions as including both the formal rules of constitutions, laws and property rights as well as informal restraints, taboos, customs, traditions, codes of conduct which order society.

This week we examine the distinction between formal institutions and informal institutions, and differences in constitutional designs in government, focusing mainly on presidential vs. parliamentary systems. Next week we will look at electoral rules, political parties, party systems, and ethnic conflict. In next week’s section I am going to have you break up into groups and design your own democracy. I’ll send out information about this exercise early next week so that you can have a head start into thinking about it.

What are some examples of institutions?

Why should we care about institutions in political science?

they structure behavior, expectations

formal vs. Informal institutions. What are they?

Levitsky and Helmke:

“formal institutions are rules and procedures that are created, communicated , and enforced through channels that are widely accepted as official.”

“informal institutions are socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside officially sanctioned channels... a key element of this definition... is that informal institutions must be enforced in some fashion” (5)

Typology

Outcomes/ Effectiveness	Effective Formal Institutions	Ineffective Formal Institutions
Convergent	Complementary	Substitutive
Divergent	Accommodating	Competing

1. *Complementary Informal Institutions*: These informal institutions do not violate the formal rules or produce different outcomes. They fill in the gap. They facilitate coordination, ease decision-making. The informal practice of R's and D's having dinner together used to ease decision making, and there's evidence that this has broken down.
 - a. Can fill in the gaps (electoral insurance in Chile)
 - b. Incentives to comply with rules. Belief in the legitimacy of the system. Belief that elections hold politicians accountable
2. *Accommodating Informal institutions*: Contradict spirit but not letter of formal rules
 - a. Corporatism – consultation with social groups. These are all practices that change outcomes of formal votes and might be seen as violating strict notions of democracy, but they can also preserve regime stability, buy-in, dampening class and religious conflict
3. *Competing Informal Institutions*: Exist when there are ineffective formal institutions. Structure incentives in ways that are incompatible with formal rules (i.e. systemic corruption), extrajudicial killings
4. *Substitutive Informal institutions*. Also where formal institutions are ineffective. These do what formal institutions were designed to do but are unable. Mexico's institutions of electoral dispute resolution. Gentleman's agreements. Citizen's police forces where the state has failed. Informal structures serve a state-like function, but are not accountable to the state or normal channels of legitimacy.
 - The interaction between formal and informal institutions can be dynamic
 - These are not necessarily mutually exclusive
 - They can be functional or dysfunctional
 - They can strengthen the state, or they can crowd out the state

They can emerge to get around formal rules or independently. They can come from the top down, or the bottom up (police violence, indigenous laws)
 Actors can do this when they lack the power to carry out formal institutional change – to solve problems that can't be addressed otherwise
 They can be used to subvert international norms or public mandates

*Are informal institutions generally seen as easy or difficult to change? (no center

to direct their actions)

But they can change – especially when formal institutional design shifts, or the strength of formal institutions is altered

Also can be changed by shifts in the distribution of power and resources and changes in shared beliefs and experiences.

Presidential vs. Parliamentary Systems

What's the difference between a presidential vs. parliamentary system

a. Presidential

fixed terms and executive directly elected

b. Parliamentary

non fixed terms and executive elected by parliament

Fundamental difference is between origin and survival.

What's the origin of the executive in a presidential system? IN a parliamentary system?

Pres: separate origin and only indirectly responsible to legislature. Survival is fixed except in extraordinary circumstances

Parliam: exec emerges from the legislature and is accountable to the legislature

Draw Diagram

a. What outcomes do we care about for democracy?

Accountability

Stability

Representation

Governance

b. What characteristics of presidential systems positively or negatively impact these outcomes?

Presidential systems.

Overly rigid. Face enormous problems and can lose support.

Parliamentary system

1. Less of a zero sum game. What does that mean?

2. No deadlock between the executive and the legislature

3. no fixed terms in office

Parliamentary governments come and go in a peaceful way.

Italy was unstable, but democracy survived. It probably would have been worse in a presidential system

Discussion: Which type is better?

It all depends

Which system has the most accountability?

Which system has the most representation?

What is most efficient (pork barrel problems in a single member district presidential system)

Are parliamentary governments good at representing regional diversity?

(often more representation in a presidential system, since legislative elections are separate) **Ideological diversity?** (perhaps less so because there is a tendency to have two parties in a presidential system)

Or do you think it really matters? What would Lipset say?

Maybe the institutions themselves aren't so important. Maybe sociological, historical factors are far more consequential. Cultural factors

If you were to work on designing a new democracy, what would you advise?

If you had an extremely divided society what would you say?

What about a PR system?

Presidential systems are twice as likely to suffer coupes than parliamentary systems up to 1990. *What do you think about this?*

What are some of the problems with the critique of presidentialism?

Parliamentary systems are associated with Britain. Small countries and Br. colonial heritage are more likely to stay democratic.

Presidential democracies were concentrated in LA. More egalitarian and weaker democratic tradition.

The relationship may be spurious. Parliamentary systems may perform better because they're small and rich.

Think about the sample of cases used to support the arguments (e.g. developing countries and presidentialism)

To give students a better understanding about the operation of parliamentary government (a system that most students are less familiar with), have them watch *Borgen*, the Danish political drama. Season 1, Episode 2 details the process by which a government is formed following an election. The clip effectively illustrates the chaos that can follow an election in a parliamentary PR

system, but also the influence that small parties can have over the substantive content of the government.

<http://movpod.in/pchrdpan4ch8>

(Click continue, close all of the windows, x out the ad over the video player, and then click play)

0:30 - 3:13

21:00-24:00

42:40-44:00

48:45 - 51:30

53:00 - 55:40

56:00- end

Addendum

Summary from other graduate students

Presidential system

Pros:

+fixed term less prob if reelection or shorter term(M & S)

+stable and predictable (M&S)

+checks and balances (M&S)

(this balances winner-take-all tendencies and gives some semblance of power-sharing)

+better accountability and identifiability (M&S)

(ppl know what gov they are voting for)

+more choice (M&S)

(2 electoral choices instead of one)

merit, rather than what party wants (M&S)

Cons

-Dual Legitimacy (Linz)

(divided government brings paralysis and possibly crisis)

-fixed term (Linz)

(hard to govern when president doesn't have majority.)

-winner-take-all (Linz)

(those that lose might reject system)

-can get a political outsider (Linz/M&S)

executive legislative conflict.

Legislative gridlock.

Each body claiming to be the legitimate representation of the people can bring the other body down

Fujimori shuts down Congress in 1992
Yeltsin did the same thing — not only closed Congress but bombed it.
Military can intervene and shut both down
one chamber can do whatever it likes.

Parliamentary Systems

Pros

- +flexible (Linz)
- (can dissolve gov if paralysis)
- +power-sharing (Linz)

Cons

- winner-takes-all if majority party in control (M & S)
- Dual legitimacy btw houses (M and S)
- unstable (M & S)

voters don't have a say in who the leader is (this is a problem if you think that direct democracy is good)

We saw African countries use the lack of veto points to subvert democracy
Serious gridlock. There's no problem of dual legitimacy. They face other kinds of problems, including extreme cabinet legitimacy.
It's hard to govern well when the government is falling every few months
Cabinet instability.