

PLS 140
Introduction to
Comparative Politics

Week 10:
Executives and coalitions

Recap

- Branches of government:
 - Judiciaries
 - Legislatures
 - ...

Plan for this week

- Executives
- Coalitions

Government and executive

- Government:
 - *The organization that acts on behalf of the state*
 - *Central political executive that actually governs the state*

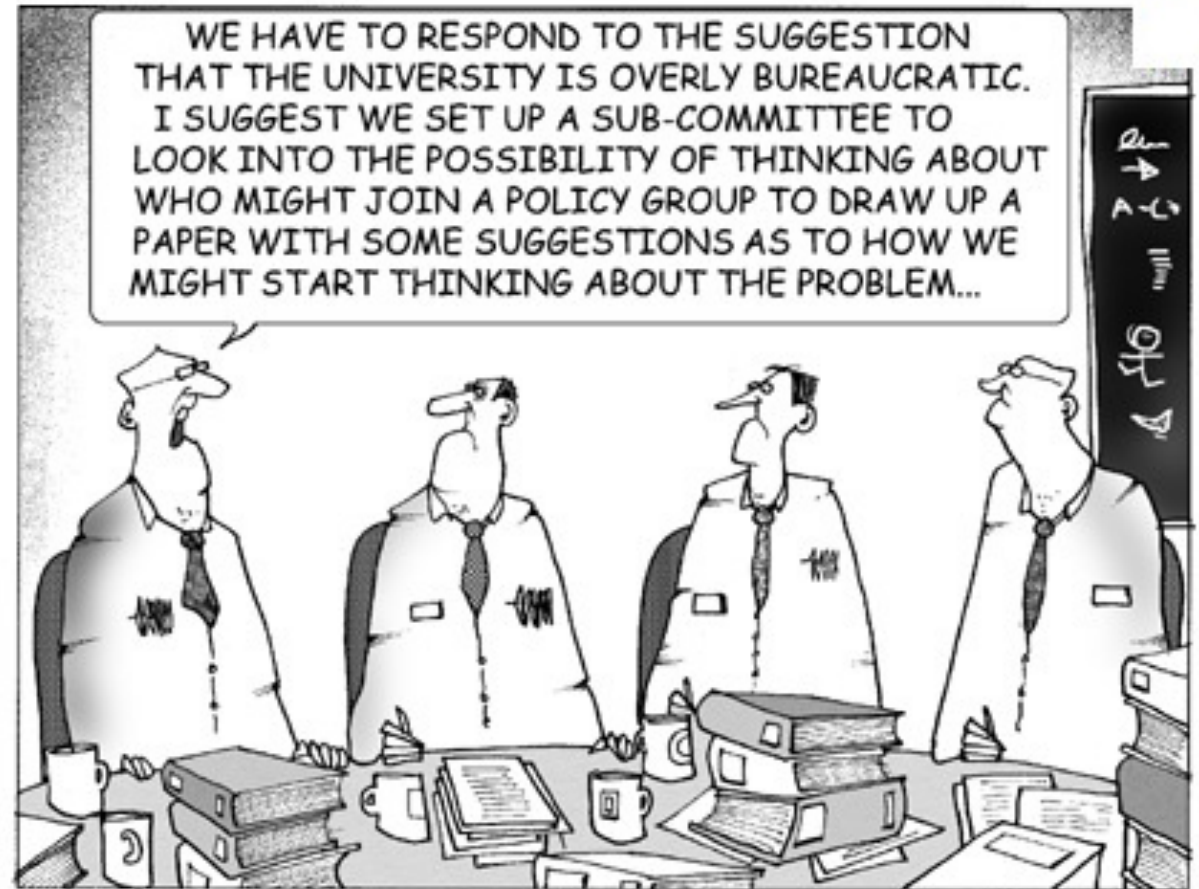
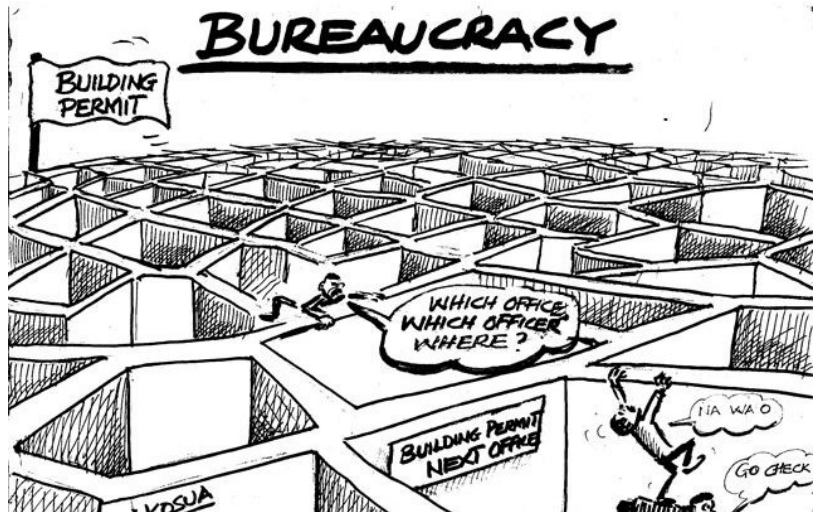
Executive

- *The branch of government that executes or administers policies and laws, encompassing both the central decision-making bodies, i.e. government, and bureaucracy*



Bureaucracy

- *Organization, staffed by unelected officials, that implements, executes, and enforces laws and policies*



Bureaucracy

- Characteristics of Weberian bureaucracy:
 - Merit recruitment and lifelong employment
 - Hierarchical organization and specialization
 - Impersonality
- Merit vs. spoils recruitment

Functions of the central political executive

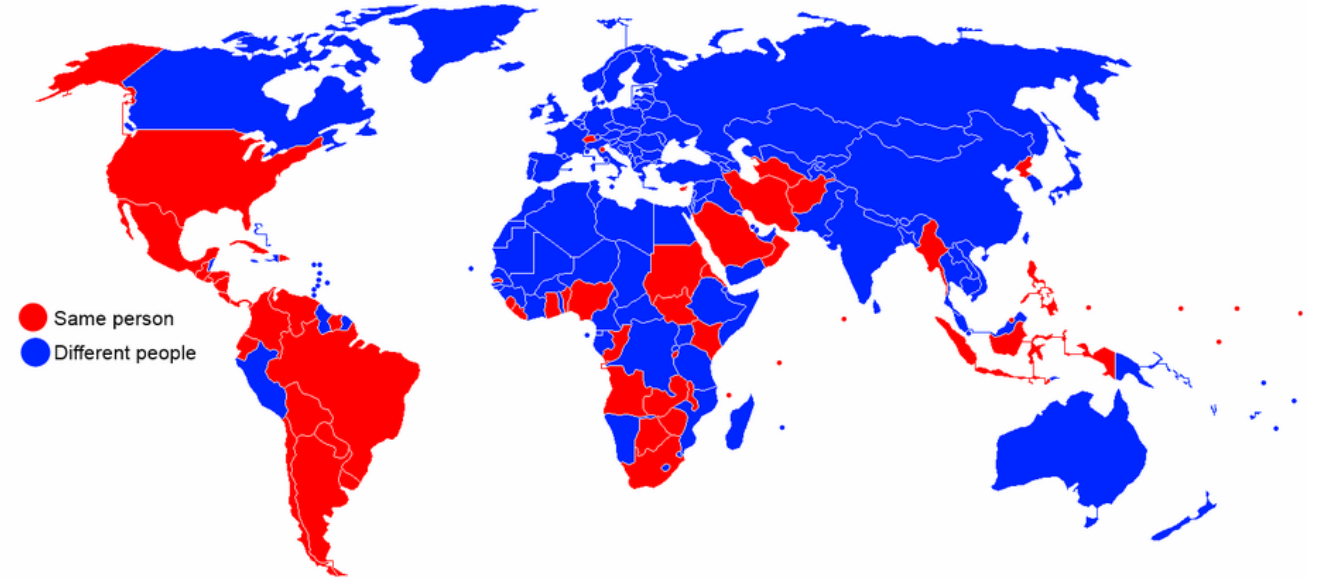
- Administration
- Veto power
- Dissolution of legislatures
- Secondary legislation: decrees and executive orders
- Declaration of the state of emergency and, rarely, war
- War-making

Limitations on executive power

- Term limits
- Impeachment / loss of confidence

Heads of state and government

- Heads of state:
 - *Officials with executive functions who also serve as their countries' symbolic representatives*
- Heads of government:
 - *Top executive officials responsible for forming governments and formulating and implementing policies*



Executive systems

- Presidential
- Parliamentary
- Semi-presidential (hybrid)

Presidential systems

- Separation of origin, survival, and powers (checks and balances) between executive and legislative branches
- President = chief executive
- Typically:
 - Head of state = head of government
 - Direct election
- Divided vs. unified governments

America's presidential system

- President, currently Joe Biden (since 2021): head of state + head of government
- Elected for up to two four-year terms



Brazil's presidential system

- President, currently Jair Bolsonaro (since 2019): head of state + head of government
- Elected for up to two four-year terms



Parliamentary systems

- Prime minister, the head of government, elected by and accountable to legislature
- No separation of origin, survival, or powers

Britain's parliamentary system

- Extensive formal powers of the monarch, currently Queen Elizabeth II (since 1952)
- Executive power exercised by Her Majesty's Government, led by the prime minister, currently Boris Johnson (since 2019)
- Executive decisions and acts of parliament implemented by the civil service



India's parliamentary system

- Ceremonial role of the president, currently Ram Nath Kovind (since 2017)
- Executive power exercised by the prime minister, currently Narendra Modi (since 2014)

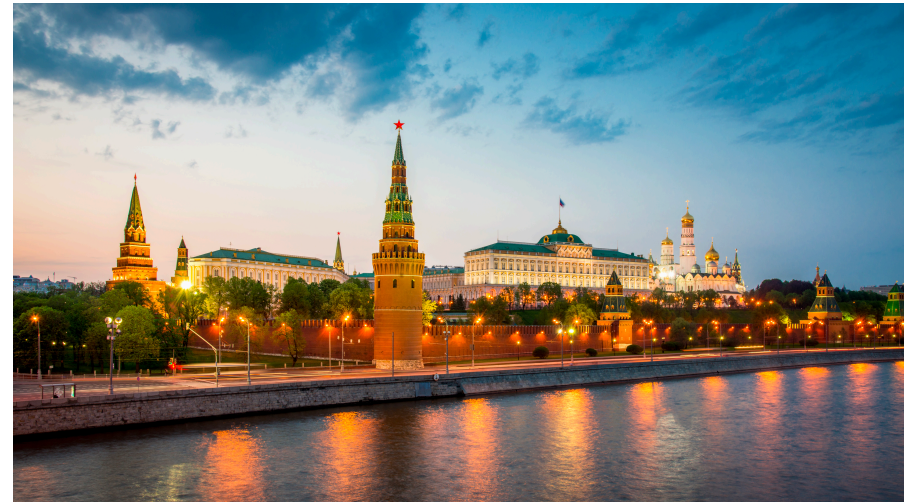


Semi-presidential systems

- Partial separation of origin, survival, and powers
- Dual executive and variation in the relative powers of the president and prime minister

Russia's semi-presidential system

- Dominant president, currently Vladimir Putin (since 2000, with a break 2008-2012)
- Subordinate prime minister, currently Mikhail Mishustin (since 2020)



Kazakhstan's semi-presidential system

- 'Superpresidential' powers of Kassym-Jomart Tokayev (since 2019)
- Subordinate prime minister, currently Alihan Smaiyllov (since 2022)



China's distinctive executive system

- Combination of the ceremonial office of the president with the powerful positions of the secretary general of the Chinese Communist Party and chairman of the Central Military Commission, held by Xi Jinping (since 2012/2013)
- Premier responsible for day-to-day government operations, currently Li Keqiang (since 2013)



Opportunities for comparison

- Geographic and historical patterns
- Congruence of executive structures with other aspects of constitutional design
- Combination of similar and different values of variables of interest

Coalitions and coalition-building

- Minimum winning coalition:
 - *An inter-party coalition that only contains the parties necessary to form a government*
- Minimum connected winning coalition:
 - *A minimum winning coalition in which all member parties occupy adjacent positions on the political spectrum*
- Grand coalition:
 - *A coalition composed of parties that hold a supermajority of seats*

Power-sharing arrangements

- Consociationalism:

- *A system with formal mechanisms of power-sharing between multiple groups*

- More common in parliamentary systems and conducive to civic peace and cooperation across the political spectrum

- Lijphart, Arend. 1969. "Consociational Democracy." *World Politics* 21 (2): 207–225.

- Winner-take-all:

- More common in, but not unique to, presidential systems

- Linz, Juan. 1990. "The Perils of Presidentialism." *Journal of Democracy* 1 (1): 51–69; Linz, Juan. 1990. "The Virtues of Parliamentarism." *Journal of Democracy* 1 (4): 84–91; Mainwaring, Scott, and Matthew Soberg Shugart. 1997. "Juan Linz, Presidentialism, and Democracy: A Critical Appraisal." *Comparative Politics* 29 (4): 449–471.

Takeaways

- Constitutions and constitutional design
- Distribution of power:
 - Federalism and unitarism
 - Branches of government
- Elections and coalitions