

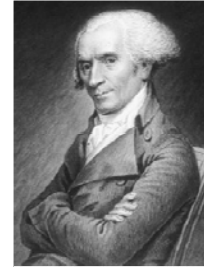


Introduction to Political Science

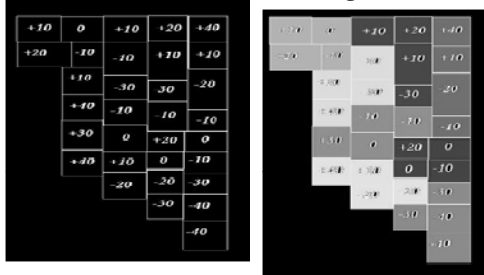
POLS 2000
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District Elections

- 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.

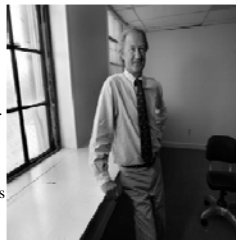
District Elections



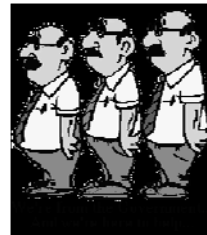
- Another problem with electoral districts is that they split the loyalty of elected representatives.
- Voters ask their representatives to play two different and often contradictory roles
- They ask them to be part of the national lawmaking assembly; they are expected to enact legislation that is in 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 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?