

PSC 160

Campaigns and Elections: A Global Perspective

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Lecture 1: Why Elections?
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Class Outline

1. Introductions
2. Democracy without Elections
3. In-class reading: Przeworski, Stokes & Manin
4. Functions of Elections

Democracy without Elections

Athenian Democracy

- ▶ Greek term, meaning 'rule by the people' (the *demos*)
- ▶ Term in currency by 5th century BC, used to describe Greek city-state ('polis') of Athens
- ▶ Athens was governed by direct democracy – no elections
 - ▶ One of several hundred such city-states
- ▶ Stated objective of government: the common good

Athenian Democracy

- ▶ Laws and other important decisions made collectively during meetings of the Assembly
- ▶ Citizens expected to attend the Assembly > 40 times a year
- ▶ Citizens expected to participate in city administration
 - ▶ Over 1000 positions to be filled, mostly by lottery
 - ▶ Most offices had one-year time limits
 - ▶ Most could only be held *once* in a lifetime
 - ⇒ Every citizen certain to occupy some public office in their lifetime

Athenian Democracy

- ▶ No political parties – but factions based on family and friendship important
 - ▶ Faction leaders known to use ‘democratic’ means to ban their opponents
- ▶ Likely only a small minority of (richer) citizens attended meetings
- ▶ Women, ‘metics’ (immigrants & their descendants), slaves could not become Athenian citizens

Athenian Democracy

- ▶ How does this differ from your understanding of democracy?
- ▶ Is Athenian democracy feasible today?

Aristocratic Republicanism

- ▶ Like Athenians, thought any legitimate political system must include the people in ruling
- ▶ However, thought it important to design a constitution that would limit the power of 'the many'
- ▶ Necessary for the public good to balance the interests of the few and the many

Example: The Roman Republic, 509-27 BC

System of mixed government:

- ▶ Govt headed by two consuls, elected annually by citizens
- ▶ Consuls advised by senate of appointed (aristocratic) magistrates
- ▶ From 493 BC, citizens also elected 'plebeian magistrates' (tribunes) with legislative authority
- ▶ Only those who attended Roman assemblies could vote

Parallels with contemporary UK, US constitutions.

Democratic Republicanism

- ▶ Body of thought developed during the 18C (the Enlightenment)
- ▶ Replaced 'mixed government' with 'separation of powers' (Montesquieu)
- ▶ Not to balance 'conflicting interests'
- ▶ To prevent the concentration of power in one institution
- ▶ Therefore, power of government divested in three institutions: legislature, executive, judiciary

Beginnings of Representative Government

- ▶ Necessity of representative government increasingly acknowledged by 18C
- ▶ Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws* (1748): impossible for people in a large state to meet as a legislative body
- ▶ Representation allows popular 'sovereignty' to be feasible in very large states – like modern nation-states

Functions of Elections

How Can Citizens Control Elected Politicians? (1)

Mandate Conception of Representation:

- ▶ The function of elections is to elect good policies
- ▶ Citizens choose between policy proposals offered in an election
- ▶ The chosen policy proposal is the “mandate” the elected government implements
- ▶ However, politicians not legally compelled to abide by their platforms anywhere (Manin 1997)

Mandate Representation

By this conception, citizens are effectively represented when:

- ▶ Politicians and voters' interests coincide, *or*
- ▶ When politicians are concerned about re-election, *or*
- ▶ When politicians are concerned about their reputation for credibility

When Might Mandate Representation Fail?

- ▶ One term limits – o/w politicians have incentives to deviate from their mandate
- ▶ If elections are costly *and* voters cannot fully discriminate which policies maximize their welfare
- ▶ If elected politicians have access to new information
 - ▶ Then, either politicians do not implement their mandate or they do not act in a representative manner

When is this a bad thing?

How Can Citizens Control Elected Politicians? (2)

Accountability Conception of Representation:

- ▶ In elections, citizens vote **retrospectively** against politicians who have been 'shirking'
 - ▶ I.e. extracting excessive **rents** from political office
- ▶ If yes, citizens sanction politicians by voting against them
- ▶ If not, citizens reward politicians by re-election

When Might Accountability Representation Fail?

- ▶ Incomplete information: voters do not know if conditions were 'good' or 'bad'
- ▶ Low clarity of responsibility
- ▶ Coalition government (e.g. the DC in postwar Italy) [More](#)
- ▶ Term limits
- ▶ Costly electoral entry
- ▶ No barriers to electoral entry

Using the Vote Effectively

“Voters have only one instrument to reach two goals: to select better policies and politicians, and to induce them to behave well in office. The question then is what happens when voters try to use the vote for both purposes.”

– Manin et al., Elections and Representations, p. 45.

Why does prospective voting mean voters loosen their control over the incumbent?

Next Class: Sociological Origins of Party Systems

To read before class tomorrow: Lipset and Rokkan, 1967.

The Politics of the Italian "First Republic"

The Christian Democrats led all governing coalitions in Italy between 1948 and 1992, while the Communists were consistently excluded from government.

Table 25.1 Index of Bipolarism (Combined Vote Share of Two Largest Parties, Chamber of Deputies)

Year	DC	PCI	Total
1950s	41.2	22.7	63.9
1960s	38.7	26.1	64.8
1970s	38.6	30.6	69.2
1980s	33.7	31.6	65.3
	DC	PDS	
1992	29.7	16.1	45.8
	FI	PDS/DS	
1994	21.0	20.4	41.4
1996	20.6	21.1	41.7
2001	29.4	16.6	46.0
	FI	Olive-Tree	
2006	23.7	31.3	55.0
	PDL	PD	
2008	37.4	33.2	70.6
	M5S	PD	
2013	25.5	25.4	50.9

Source: Bufacchi and Burgess, *Italy Since 1989*, p.173; adapted and updated by author. For 1994-2001, the table reports vote shares in the proportional section of the ballot.