Executives and Bureaucracies

1. **Presidents and Prime Ministers**

When thinking about executives, it is important to note the difference between a head of state and a chief of government.

Democracies can be considered of two types: presidential or parliamentary systems.

They both have a multi branch governments (legislative, executive and judiciary). In a presidential system these three are strongly separated while in presidential systems the division is blurred. The executive branch is usually the most important one and in a presidential system it is guided by the president while in parliamentary systems is it controlled by a prime minister and a king or queen/a president.

Presidents of presidential systems hold most of the powers, while in parliamentary systems the president’s role is mostly symbolic.

In parliamentary system it is the prime minister who holds executive power, and he is the head of government, while the monarch or president is the head of state.

The head of state is theoretically the top leader, but the duties are largely symbolic, and they serve more to represent the nation as a symbol of unity.

The chief of government is the real working executive and has meaningful political power within the system. In practice they guide government, run election campaigns, and head political parties.

The United States combines the two offices in the institution of the presidency. From appointing judges and granting pardons, to vetoing laws and acting as the nation’s chief diplomat on foreign policy, the Commander in Chief is a pretty powerful person, but actually not as powerful as you might think. The Constitution also limits presidential powers to maintain balance among the three branches of government.

In parliamentary systems the chief executive is indirectly elected by the national legislature from its own ranks. Prime ministers are responsible to parliament and are secure in their seats if they represent a majority party.

This means that there are no institutional limits beyond the support of the majority required for them to stay in office. They can be ousted by a vote of no-confidence or by a loss of the majority in the general election.

This means the prime minister's strength is dependent on the stability of his or her majority in parliament.

Presidential systems bypass this by having a strong president who is not responsible to parliament and is elected separately for fixed terms.

Presidential systems can suffer from the deadlock of democracy, which parallels parliamentary immobilism.

* 1. **“Forming a Government” In Britain**

The British system is the "classic" of parliamentary systems.

Monarch invites leader of majority party to form a government and become the prime minister.

The prime minister appoints cabinet (the government) and subcabinet officials, all of whom are members of parliament and all represent important groups within the majority.

In theory the PM is the first among equals and guides cabinet to consensus on issues of policy.

However, the PM is not just an equal partner. He or she has real power; for example, he/she can "shake up" cabinet by dismissing ministers.

In practice, the British cabinet now frequently just concurs with decisions made earlier by the PM and a few key ministers.

* 1. **“Constructive No Confidence” in Germany**

The German parliamentary system is built around the idea of constructive no-confidence.

The German chancellor is as strong as British PM in terms of setting policy and running cabinet.

One major difference between the two is the mechanism for removal:

The German chancellor can only be ousted by a constructive vote of no-confidence, which is an attempt to avoid the parliamentary instability of the Weimar Republic.

Parliament must have a cabinet ready to replace the ousted chancellor and it is much harder to replace than just oust, which means that chancellors are much more likely to remain in power.

Executives in a constructive no-confidence vote system are stronger than those without.

* 1. **“Cohabitation in France”**

France's system is "semi-presidential" and combines a working prime minister with a chancellor.

Russia and China have similar systems.

If both the president and the prime minister are from the same party there is no problem, as the president appoints a PM from his or her party and the parliament approves.

1986 and 1993 saw a socialist president with a conservative majority in parliament, which meant there was a chance that the majority would not approve the president's selection.

This led to cohabitation.

Gaullist (conservative) premiers appointed to handle domestic affairs and the president (socialist) handled foreign affairs.

This happened again in 1997 with a conservative president and a socialist premier.

Cohabitation allows France to bypass legislative-executive deadlock that is common in presidential systems.

* 1. **The “Presidentialization” of Prime Ministers**

Political scientists have noted the trend of the presidentialization of prime ministers where prime ministers with stable majorities start to behave like presidents.

This tendency is strong in Britain and Germany.

In these situations, the personality of the PM is beginning to matter more than policy, party, or ideology.

* 1. **Executive Terms**

The terms of executives vary between presidential and parliamentary systems.

PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM:

Presidential terms are fixed and, in some cases, limited in total numbers of terms that can be served.

This makes presidents generally hard to remove from office until their term is expired.

Can be impeached although the process is difficult, and the outcome is not guaranteed.

PALIAMENTARY SYSTEM:

Prime ministers have no limit on their tenure in office as long as their party continues to win a majority in parliament.

For example, Thatcher was in office 11 years; Kohl was in office 16 years.

Prime ministers have an advantage in that they can dissolve parliament when it is most convenient in electoral terms for their party and hold new elections, which helps ensure that they can retain their majority in parliament.

However, prime ministers can be ousted quickly if they lose the support of the majority.

1. **Executive Leadership**

In general, there are two different styles of executive leadership.

HANDS-ON:

Jimmy Carter tried to supervise and manage nearly all aspects of his administration.

Wrong approach: executives scatter and exhaust themselves.

HAND-OFF:

Ronald Reagan supervised little and delegated authority.

Paid little attention to critical matters, letting important issues slide.

With respect to executive leadership, is there a middle ground?

Franklin Roosevelt used a style called Deliberate chaos: setting up multiple agencies and letting them clash to ensure that only really important matters hit his desk.

* 1. **The Danger of Expecting Too Much**

Citizens expect chief executives to solve all the problems in the state, but the reality is that executives cannot (and often do not) solve all the problems, which leads to disappointment among citizens.

Successful executives are ones who can project moods of calm, progress, and optimism and serve as a guiding figure for the public.

1. **Cabinets**

Cabinets are the heads of the various executive agencies of the bureaucracy.

In the United States, cabinet heads are called secretaries; in Europe they are generally referred to as ministers.

The cabinet helps develop government policy on a range of issues.

The size of cabinets varies from state to state and there is no "right" size for a cabinet.

The U.S. cabinet has historically been small and slow to change due to the American commitment to limited government.

Economic shocks have led to a gradual expansion of the American cabinet.

* 1. **Who Serves in a Cabinet?**

There is a great deal of difference between ministers in parliamentary systems and secretaries in the American system.

PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEM:

Cabinet ministers come from parliament and continue to serve in parliament while they are in cabinets.

PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM:

Department secretaries are usually not working politicians but lawyers, leaders in business, and academics.

Given these differences, is one better than the other?

Parliamentary cabinet members have a great deal of experience and can be criticized by the opposition in parliament.

Presidential cabinet members bring a fresh perspective but can be naïve and run into difficulties with Congress.

In the United States, cabinets are becoming less important and the cabinet meets infrequently. As a consequence, most cabinet secretaries are "vice presidents in charge of spending.”

1. **Bureaucracies**

DEF: *A bureaucracy is any large organization of appointed officials who implement laws and policies.*

The term bureaucracy has negative connotations for most people. These agencies were established to help the government manage and carry out laws much more efficiently, to bring the rule making and enforcement closer to the experts.

Max Weber, the German sociologist, studied bureaucracy, disliked it, but saw no way to avoid it as it was necessary to the functioning of modern organizations.

Bureaucracies have specific characteristics that Weber identified. These are ideal types.

* Operates under rules and procedures.
* Organized into a hierarchy.
* Provides rationality, uniformity, predictability, and supervision to government.

Another definition of bureaucracy is "permanent government."

Other officials come and go but bureaucrats spend their careers with government and have a lot of expertise. Bureaucracies are inherently conservative and hard to change.

* 1. **The United States**

Most civil servants work at the state and local levels of government.

15 percent of the total bureaucracy is at the federal level.

At the federal level there are 15 cabinet departments that comprise 85-90 percent of the federal bureaucracy.

All federal agencies share a common model: Funded by Congress, headed by a secretary who is appointed by the president with the consent of the Senate.

This creates a host of political loyalties among the cabinet secretaries.

Because secretaries and undersecretaries are political appointees, they are technically not bureaucrats using Weber's definition.

Bureaucrats in the United States are powerful and may be more important in innovating laws than the public or Congress.

A good example of this is cigarette package warning labels, which was a policy initiative that came from the bureaucracy.

Another source of bureaucratic power is that in the United States, departments carry out unclear laws and interpret the meaning and intent of those laws during the implementation process.

Bureaucrats have a lot of knowledge, and that knowledge is power.

Bureaucracies also develop constituencies, which make them very hard to eliminate as illustrated by Reagan's failed attempt to abolish the Department of Energy.

U.S. bureaucracy is small compared to other states, especially those in Latin America and Europe that have strong statist traditions.

* 1. **Communist Countries**

Soviet Union was one of the world's most bureaucratic states and it was the cause of its undoing.

In this the Soviet state was ironic because Marxist theory maintained there was no need for Western-style bureaucracy, but it was quickly implemented by Lenin and increased by Stalin.

Five-year economic plans for directing the economy were a clear effort at using the bureaucracy to manage and direct the entire Soviet economy.

The top Soviet bureaucrats were called the nomenklatura, who were a privileged elite, all of whom were members of the Communist Party.

This privileging mechanism made the Soviet bureaucracy very conservative by nature, as the best and brightest were recruited into the bureaucracy and then resisted changes that would affect their positions.

In China, all officials are also party members.

In theory this is supposed to fight corruption, but administration in China is dangerously decentralized, which makes corruption not only easier but more likely.

Bureaucratic corruption is China's Achilles heel and could easily destabilize the state.

* 1. **France**

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, France set the pattern for the rest of Europe with its heavily bureaucratized state.

Napoleon made the bureaucracy even more rational and effective, drawing on the model set forward by Richelieu.

French bureaucrats are trained at the "Great Schools" that emphasize specialized training.

The power of French bureaucracy was increased due to the instability of the Third and Fourth Republics.

As a result, France is heavily bureaucratized and extremely centralized.

* 1. **Germany**

The German bureaucracy bears the stamp of the Prussian state nobility called Junkers, who controlled almost all civil service positions in Prussia and brought Prussian values, including loyalty to the state, to German administration, following unification under Bismarck.

This was a weakness during the Weimar Republic because bureaucrats had a contempt for democracy, which helped fuel a glorification of the state and militarization.

Following the war, as Germany rebuilt democracy, there has been a strong commitment by German civil servants to democracy and democratic values.

This is illustrated in part by the Interior Ministry and its programs to fight political extremism.

A final distinctive feature of German bureaucrats is that they tend to have the mentality of Roman law, neatly organized and fixed into codes.

* 1. **Britain**

The United Kingdom has strong traditions of local self-government and dispersion of power, which has encouraged legislative control of administrative authority.

Central government did not begin to run things until the twentieth century.

In 1870 a merit-based civil service using competitive exams was established to fight corruption.

British ministers are accountable to parliament, but real power is in the hands of the career "permanent secretary" and other career bureaucrats.

The British bureaucracy more tightly controlled than U.S. bureaucracy.

British bureaucrats pride themselves on being apolitical and on acting solely in the nation's best interest.

* 1. **Japan**

Japan provides an extreme example of "rule by bureaucrats," a situation in which the bureaucrats are more powerful than, and often have a great deal of contempt for, elected officials.

The Japanese bureaucracy was based on the French model, so the bureaucracy was always powerful, and it became more powerful after World War II.

The key ministries are finance, industry, agriculture, construction, and trade and they set much of the policy for the Japanese state.

In Japan, the ministries are self-contained, which means they do not cooperate with each other and generally do not work for the good of the whole.

The long-term economic stagnation in Japan has contributed to a new generation of Japanese politicians trying to reform bureaucracy, but there has been little success.

1. **The Trouble with Bureaucracy**

As noted earlier, bureaucracy seems to be universally vilified and there are many different sources for this dislike of bureaucracy.

For example, in France and Italy hatred of bureaucrats is part of political culture.

In the U.S., the bureaucracy is frequently the target of hostile political rhetoric and labelled as inefficient and wasteful.

The problem is simply that all the metrics that we would usually employ to evaluate a private program or business, such as efficiency, productivity, and profitability, are hard to apply in government programs.

Bureaucracy can exhibit particular pathologies that also contribute to the continual dislike of bureaucrats and bureaucratic organizations. For example, bureaucracies can develop signs of what is now called Eichmannism and "Parkinson's Law."

Eichmannism is the defence of "Just doing my job."

Parkinson's Law is an expression that speaks to the inefficiencies with the pithy expression, "Work fills to expand the time allotted to it."

Another source of frustration with bureaucracy is the apparent connection between corruption and bureaucracy.

The more regulations that are in place, the more bureaucrats who are needed to implement them, which increases the opportunities for corruption.

Early theorists assumed the bureaucracy would never make public policy and believed that bureaucrats would be apolitical implementers of laws passed by legislatures.

In practice the implementation of laws cannot be apolitical, which gives bureaucrats a lot of power even though they are not elected and are unaccountable to the public.

Most nations now have bureaucrats who make public policy and are not publicly accountable.