

Kinds of Democracy

New Models of Federal Republics and Multi-Level Governments

Christopher Portosa Stevens

In “Kinds of Democracy,” I vary the kind of democracy across levels in multi-level governments and federations. Varying the kind of democracy from level to level produces new competitive structures (and also new kinds of political complexity), such as producing opportunity structures for political parties to move up or down in a federation or multi-level government. Varying the kind of democracy from level to level also partly resembles some of the irregular and complex political forms of city-state republics of ancient Greece and early modern Italy, particularly compared to more standardized forms of democracy in the contemporary world. Varying the kind of democracy from level to level is also a new kind of response to the “iron law of oligarchy,” since it is a way of increasing the competitive and democratic nature government by creating new opportunity structures for political competition between political parties, and new opportunity structures for organizational differentiation and competition across governmental and societal levels.

I also discuss some practical applications of designing new models of constitutions based on varying the kind of democracy from level to level. These include the potential for remedying violent conflict by creating opportunity structures for cross-cutting alliances by political parties across regions, across national and regional divides, and also across possible ethnic, religious, linguistic, and ideological cleavages within and across regions.

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Political design and construction may be traced back in its origins to ancient Greece, such as to Solon's pre-Socratic initiatives cancelling debt slavery, abolishing the existing aristocratic order, and establishing a class system based on social mobility. As social theorist Alvin Gouldner reminds us, there was a "bold pragmatic manner in which constitutions [were] sometimes established for new colonies," and a "calculating way the older tribal structures [were] deliberately manipulated with a view to strengthening the polis."¹ Modern political and electoral design, however, is a largely modern phenomenon associated with, and stimulated by, the rise and spread of democratic government over the last few centuries. This began with the founding of the US republic in 1776 and the French republic in 1789, and includes the more recent spread of democracy – in the wider perspective of history – dating from what has been called the "third wave" of democratization spreading from Portugal in 1974 to many states in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and around the world. As with the early modern spread of constitutional and democratic government, the contemporary spread of democracy may stimulate greater interest and thought into the nature of political and electoral design. Here, I seek to make a contribution to the literature on political and electoral design by varying the kind of democracy from level to level to produce new political and competitive structures, and new models of federal republics and multi-level governments (these are also identifiable as new kinds of complexity or "variable political geometries").² By contrast, most governments around the world standardize or reproduce the same kind of government from level to level, with a few exceptions (discussed below).

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Varying the kind of democracy from level to level is also a new kind of response to the "iron law of oligarchy,"³ since it is a way of increasing the competitive and democratic nature government by creating new opportunity structures for political competition between political parties, and new opportunity structures for organizational differentiation and competition across governmental and societal levels.

Varying the kind of democracy from level to level enables, given Duverger's Law,⁴ the designing of new, variable government forms that have predictive and explanatory content: new political party systems are predicted to emerge from level to level, and, in some cases, across

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levels, as some structures create opportunities for political parties at one level to competitively displace political parties above or below in a federation or multi-level government.⁵ *It is thus possible to design multi-level governmental forms that create new opportunity structures for variable political party systems including two political parties at the national or federal level, multiple political parties at the state or regional levels, and structural opportunities for political parties from the lower or regional levels “jumping up” to the national or federal level, and political parties at the national or federal level being relegated to the lower or regional levels.*⁶ I shall discuss some of these main government forms, and then I shall discuss the larger set of possibilities (or logical space) of varying the kind of constitutional and democratic government from level to level in federations and multi-level governments. (Following political scientists Lisbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, I use the concept of “multi-level government” as inclusive of and more general than the concepts of federation and federal republic).⁷

States with multi-level governments tend to have the same kind of democracy from level to level; that is, they tend to have similar or symmetrical governmental structures and voting procedures at the central government and provincial or regional government levels (such as India and the United States). However, as suggested, there are new, specifiable alternatives: It is possible to design structures of multi-level government that have single-member, simple plurality (SMP) voting procedures at one governmental level and proportional (PR) voting procedures at another government level, such as SMP voting at the central government level and PR voting at the level of the regional or provincial governments (or vice versa).

Thus, given Duverger’s Law, i.e., SMP voting tends to generate two political parties per electoral district, and PR voting tends to generate multiple political parties, these political structures have predictive content.

For example, in the case of a government form with SMP voting at the central government level and PR voting for the governments at the regional level there will be a tendency to two parties above, and multiple parties below. These predictable, asymmetric consequences differ from the symmetrical consequences of having two parties above and below (as in, say, SMP voting at the central and regional levels in the US) or having multiple parties above and below (as in, say, PR voting at the central and regional levels in Brazil).

Another consequence is that this structure places greater competitive pressure on the two major parties at the central government level than the more familiar political form of having two parties at both the central government and regional government levels (as in the US). This is because this form creates an opportunity structure for competing multiple parties at the lower or regional level to “jump up” a level and replace one of the two major parties (with one of the former two major parties being relegated to regional status or going completely defunct). It is thus possible to design models of constitutions that roughly approximate the competitive structure of some international professional soccer leagues that “relegate” the worst performing teams to a lower league and elevate the best performing teams from a higher league.⁸

Alternatively, the above discussed structure may be reversed, with PR voting procedures at the central government level, and SMP voting procedures at the regional level. Again, as a consequence of Duverger’s Law, this creates an asymmetrical party system with a tendency to multiple parties above and two parties per electoral district at the regional or state levels. Further, this form creates an opportunity structure for the multiple parties at the central government level to “jump into” and displace parties in electoral districts at the regional level. This form appears to place greater competitive pressure on the two political parties in districts at the regional level because of the possibility of the multiple parties at the central government level penetrating and “jumping into” the electoral districts at the regional level. (These basic forms are summarized in Table 1).

Discussion and qualifications of classic “exceptions” to Duverger’s Law: The models of governments and predicted consequences in Table 1 are simplifications and assume the existence of enough cultural diversity and the existence of organizational levels in a state (i.e., federal or multi-level governments) to enable the emergence of two or more political parties to emerge at each government level (i.e., center, provinces or regions, or additional levels). That is, federations and multi-level governments themselves create opportunities for regional political parties to form, as in the emergence of sizeable regional political parties in the history of the federations of Canada and the U.S., particularly during the 19th and early 20th centuries. If the U.S. and Canada had not been federations, regional political parties across regions would not have formed. Famously-held exceptions to Duverger’s Law may be explained in terms of opportunity structures of federations themselves:

Table 1: Federations, multi-level governments by electoral mechanisms

	Center	Regions	Opportunity Structure Favors	Examples
Gov't A	Single Member Plurality voting (SMP)	SMP	Two parties per electoral district, above & below	20th-21st century U.S. (approx.)
Gov't B	Proportional voting (PR)	PR	Multiple parties above & below	Brazil, Argentina (approx.)
Gov't C	SMP	PR	Two parties above, multiple parties below	Never attempted
Gov't D	PR	SMP	Multiple parties above, two parties below	Never attempted

The existence of federations and multi-level governments create the opportunities for multiple political parties to form, even when there is SMP voting (examples include multiple parties in India, and also the US and Canada historically).

Cultural cleavages, including ethnic and ideological cleavages, also have been held to generate exceptions to Duverger's Law,⁹ and these also may be explained in terms of opportunity structures: Extreme or overwhelming cultural homogeneity, whether ethnic, religious, or ideological, would eliminate political party formation and allegiance across cultural, ethnic, and ideological cleavages, just as eliminating federal or multi-levels of government would eliminate the possibility of regional political parties forming at regional government levels (since there wouldn't be any). Thus, for example, the existence of considerable cultural and ideological diversity in Canada across regions in Canadian (in conjunction with the multiple government levels inherent in its federal structure), and tremendous cultural and linguistic diversity in India across regions in India (in conjunction with the multiple government levels inherent in its federal structure), contributed to the success of multiple parties in these countries even with the electoral use of SMP voting.

This paper, then, moves the concept of "opportunity structure" from the sociology of individual opportunities for gain, criminality, access to information and social networks to groups and organizations: Variables such as different kinds of organizational structures (such as federal or unitary states), electoral voting procedures (such as Single Member Plurality versus Proportional voting), and culture (as in over-

whelming cultural similarity or homogeneity reducing or stunting political party formation, as in Confucian or Communist China, or the considerable linguistic, ethnic, and ideological diversity that facilitates the growth of political parties in modern Europe and India) create different opportunity structures for different kinds of political party systems across societies.

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In addition to varying voting procedures, it is possible to design multi-level governments that have a parliamentary system at one level, and a presidential system or executive-legislative split at another level (by contrast, most federal governments, such as Germany and India with parliamentary systems at the federal and regional levels, or the US, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, Presidents at the federal level and Governors at its state levels, reproduce similar kinds of government structures at the regional levels as at the national level).

The focus of this paper is largely in the identification and exploration of these new and specifiable variable political geometries. However, I also discuss some potential practical uses of these new models of constitutional government in addition to simply elaborating the new models of constitutional governments themselves.

Models of Multi-Level Governments

There are myriad ways of organizing elections. One of the most novel – and most peculiar – was the Venetian Republic’s method of selecting the nominee for its chief executive, the *doge*, from the “Great Council,” a body of which “the majority were nobles, but some commoners also.”¹⁰ Explicitly systematized in 1268, the elaborate procedure ran thusly: “From the Great Council there was chose by lot 30; the 30 were reduced by lot to 9; the 9 named 40; the 40 were reduced by lot to 12; the 12 named 25; the 25 were reduced by lot to 9; the 9 named 45; the 45 were reduced by lot to 11; the 11 named 41; the 41 nominated the doge,” who was then up for election. Modern electoral processes tend to be simpler although there is considerable variation in the electoral mechanisms used. Of those eligible to vote, how many votes do they have per election? One person-one vote, or several by which voters may rank candidates? What is the district magnitude, that is, the number of offices or seats per district? And what is the threshold for winning? Is it simply who wins the most votes? Or, does election require a majority of votes, or an even higher threshold? If the threshold is not met (e.g., a majority), is there a run-off election in which the field is narrowed by

some standard, such as the first two candidates being selected? There are all these possibilities, and more.

However, in part from a desire for simplicity, I will be focusing on two widespread electoral mechanisms in the proposed designs for new multi-level governments: single member districts with a plurality threshold (“first past the post”), and proportional elections by which votes are allocated either directly to parties (as in “closed” or “party-list” proportionality) or indirectly to parties (as in “open” proportionality systems whereby votes are cast for individual candidates and then tallied by party membership).¹¹ Single member districts by plurality (SMP) are found in many former British colonies, including India, Kenya, Jamaica, the US, Ghana, Trinidad, and Canada. As per Duverger’s Law, there is a tendency for each electoral district to have two political parties (although multiple political parties have emerged in India due to its high degree of linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity, and also its federal structure).¹²

While SMP voting is especially common across the former British Empire, proportional (PR) voting is the most popular outside the former British Empire, including much of continental Europe (with the familiar exception of France), and also Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Israel, Sri Lanka, South Korea, South Africa, Turkey, Uruguay, and others. As a consequence of Duverger’s Law, there is a tendency of proportional voting systems to produce multiple parties (the hybrid form of mixed-member proportional voting also tends to produce multiple political parties, though the effect is less pronounced).¹³ Roughly speaking, the geography of voting systems tends to follow cultural lines, with single member districts by a plurality threshold found in the UK and many of its former colonies, and proportionality systems (including hybrid mixed member proportional systems) found in areas outside of the British Empire and also much of continental Europe.¹⁴ (However, this has started to breakdown over time, as regional and municipal governments in the UK, New Zealand, and Australia have experimented with alternative democratic forms and voting procedures).¹⁵

In the following I seek to show how new governmental forms can be created by varying the type of voting system in multi-level government structures (such as two-level federal governments), and that these new government forms have predictive and explanatory content.

Most multi-level governments, including virtually all federations, have similar voting systems at the central government level as at the level of regions or provinces. This includes the use of SMP voting at the central and regional government levels of India and the United States (the form “Government A” in Table 1), and the use of PR voting at the central and regional government levels of Argentina and Brazil (the form “Government B” in Table 1). However, as delineated in Table 1, it is possible for multi-level governments to differ in their voting systems from level to level. Table 1 delineates four basic forms of multi-level government by the common and popular voting systems of SMP and PR. Government “C” features SMP voting at the central government level and PR voting at the regional or provincial level. Government “D” features PR voting at the central government level and SMP voting at the regional level. The political opportunity structures of governments “C” and “D” create new, asymmetric structures, which have predictable and specifiable results, as per of Duverger’s Law.

These can be elaborated in turn. Government “C” creates the possibility of a variable multi-level party structure. As discussed, the model implies that it is possible to explicitly design democratic constitutions with predictive content: The model predicts a tendency to two parties above, and multiple parties below. Thus, Government “C” creates an opportunity structure for competing multiple parties at the lower or regional level to “jump up” a level, extend their political representation below to above, and replace one of the two major parties (with one of the former two major parties being relegated to a status as a party at the provincial or regional level – or becoming completely defunct if it is not represented at the regional level).¹⁶

Government “C” is more competitive than Government “A” since it creates more opportunities for political parties to replace or competitively displace one of the two dominant political parties at the center.¹⁷ Moreover, the two dominant political parties at the center will have competitive pressure to seek endorsements and support from the multiple parties at the regions, and likely would face *criticism by parties at the regional level that may be absent at the center*. In addition, a multi-party system at the level of the regions, instead of a two-party system dominant across the national and regional levels, creates opportunity structures for successful (or efficient) regional political parties to “jump” laterally and competitively displace less successful or less efficient political parties of different regions or municipal governments.

Alternatively, the structure of Government “C” might be reversed, with PR voting procedures at the central government level, and SMP voting procedures at the provincial or regional level. As in Government “D” in Table A, this creates the possibility of a variable multi-level party structure as well, but with a tendency to multiple parties above, and two parties per electoral district at the provincial or regional level. Further, this form creates an opportunity structure for the multiple parties at the central government level to “jump into” and displace parties in electoral districts at the provincial or regional level. Compared to Government “B,” Government “D” places greater competitive stress on regional political parties. Since voters will vote in national elections with multiple parties but will vote in regional elections with effectively two political parties per electoral district, there will be opportunities for voters to vote for different political parties in national and regional elections.

As suggested, this discrepancy between the voting systems in national and regional elections could create opportunities for parties succeeding in the multi-party system at the central government level to “jump into” and possibly replace political parties in electoral districts at the regional government level. *This government structure may be attractive for those that are interested in pressuring or stimulating regional and municipal levels of government to be more competitive and efficient, since political parties at the national level will have the opportunity from election to election to compete with and possibly displace one of the two major parties per electoral district at the lower, regional levels of government.*

In Government “C” there is an opportunity structure for multiple political parties at the regions to place greater competitive pressure on the center; alternatively, Government “D” creates an opportunity structure for political parties at the center to place greater competitive pressure downwardly to the regions (and also municipal governments). Consequently, in countries with considerable regional diversity in political party systems (possibly because of regional cultural diversity), it would appear that introducing the structure of Government “D” would be a way of reducing regional diversity in political party systems (if this was to be considered desirable). By contrast, Government “C” may be used to release or express regional political and cultural diversity at least at the level of the regions instead of suppressing it.

It also should be recognized, though, that even the static, non-variable, and most common federal government forms of “A” and “B” in

Table 1 create limited opportunity structures for multi-level party systems that vary from level to level. As discussed in the introductory section, there are exceptions to Duverger's Law that include the existence and limited success of largely regionally based third parties in the federations of Canada and the United States. The federal republic of India would be another significant example: The same voting procedures are in place at the national and regional levels (PR voting), but, due to other factors, especially ethnic and linguistic cleavages, more political parties historically function at the regional levels than the national levels.

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*Thus, compared to Governments A and B, Governments C and D create more political competition.*¹⁸ Moreover, Governments C and D enable kinds of *organizational exit, organizational movement, and organizational growth and contraction.*¹⁹ For example, in Government "C" political parties (kinds of organizations) can move vertically from lower government levels or jurisdictions to higher government levels. This is organizational movement and growth: parties "jumping up" from lower level jurisdictions to the central government level or higher-level jurisdictions. There is also organizational exit and contraction by which parties may descend or are relegated to the regional level or specific regional or local jurisdictions (in some cases the parties might go extinct). Organizational exit does not necessarily involve contraction; organizational exit and growth are possible, as when a party from above or below moves vertically above or below and establishes itself at the national or regional level, or if a regional party moves to another region or regions and establishes itself as a greater political party at the regional level. Government "D" enables political parties to move vertically from higher government levels to lower government levels (parties "jumping into," growing, and moving vertically from a higher government level to the regional level or specific regional or local jurisdictions).

If the powerful and useful concept of "variable political geometry" is applied to the variable political shapes of the European Union and also to the variable political shapes which emerge across levels of state and economic globalization, Governments "C" and "D" may be said to create new models of variable political geometries. This is an example, then, of social science designing and organizing complexity, and also being able to predict different variable political geometries based on different initial conditions (as in the different government forms of Table 1).

Another way of thinking about the predictive content of the models in Table 1 is that the different models of constitutions may be compared and ranked in terms of their different predictive consequences. Other conditions held constant, Government “C” (with SMP above and PR below) is more likely to have two parties above and multiple parties below than Governments “A,” “B,” or “D”; government “C” is more likely to have a political party from the regional or state level “jump up” and relegate or eliminate a political party at the national level than Governments “A,” “B,” or “D”; additionally, government “D” with PR above and SMP below is more likely to have multiple parties above and two parties below than governments “A,” “B,” or “D”; moreover, comparatively speaking, government “D” is more likely to place competitive pressure (reducing the existence and influence of regional parties) than “C” (in which greater competitive pressure rises from below than above compared to government “D”). These models, then, have predictive and explanatory content, and the models in this paper also may serve as designs for state constitutions.

On the Practical Nature of Organizational and Political Design

Eminent sociologist James Coleman has argued that the preponderance and success of purposive and self-consciously designed forms of collective action in the modern era, “social inventions” or different kinds of constructed or designed organizations, including limited liability corporations, trade unions, organizational charters, formal bureaucracies, government agencies, nation-states, and political constitutions, makes the subject of designing organizations and forms of collective action more central to the disciplines of sociology and political science.²⁰

Coleman called for social scientists to re-orient themselves to the design of new organizations, forms of collective action, and other kinds of social inventions or social technologies (as opposed to studying primordial social organization such as families, clans, or tribes). It should be appreciated that another contribution of this paper is that it develops social inventions or “social technologies” – models of constitutions including competitive political party systems – that are, at the same time, function as explanatory models with predictive content. The development of explanatory models in social science many times follows the philosophy of science attached to model building in

physics and astronomy. By contrast, model building in the biological sciences sometimes involves developing models with predictive content that also function as models of “natural technologies” (a concept that goes back to Giambattista Vico and also Karl Marx) or adaptive structures. Thus, the model of the double-helical structure of the DNA predicts the characteristics the DNA molecule, and, at the same time, also is a model of a “natural technology” or the universal biochemical basis of the genetic instructions for the building blocks of cells and tissue differentiation in organisms. Though Coleman did not recognize that, in his call for a focus on the design of social inventions and kinds of organizations, models of “social inventions” including the variable political geometries in this paper, can be both models with predictive content and also models for collective action. In this case, I have attempted to design new models of political constitutions that may be useful for re-organizing societies around the world in new ways, such as increasing their internal organizational differentiation, complexity, and competition.

Since Coleman also argues that a considerable difference between the developed world and the developing world over the past 500 years is the far greater organizational diversity, differentiation, and complexity in the developed world compared to much of the developing world, the developing world may have an interest in political constitutions that may increase the organizational differentiation, complexity, and competition in their societies in addition to the contemporary role of economic globalization in increasing the number and differentiation of business corporations in their societies.²¹

The foregoing “practical application” is relatively abstract. In the following section, I discuss some potential practical applications to conflict in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Practical Applications to Conflict in the Middle East & Beyond

It is also possible to make this approach useful to designing constitutions as constitutional remedies to violence and conflict in different conflict zones around the world, such as the Middle East. Thus, in zones of conflict with violence across multiple cultural and religious cleavages (instead of political competition across ethnic and cultural cleavages), varying the kind of democracy from level to level may create new kinds of political and legal structures for remedying conflict. For example, a constitution with voting procedures that generates two

major political parties at the national level and multiple political parties at the regional levels, will have a constitution that tends to fuse or unify the country at the national level, but that does not shut out or attempt to eliminate powerful political or potentially militarized factions at the regional levels. Multiple political parties at the regional levels also enables opportunity structures for cross-cutting alliances across dominant ethnic and cultural cleavages, across regions and also across government levels. That is, it creates opportunities for political parties within each ethnic or cultural cleavage, say, Shia Socialists, Sunni Arab socialists, and Kurdish socialists and also Shia economic liberals, Sunni Arab economic liberals, and Kurdish economic liberals, being able to form political party alliances across familiar global ideological cleavages and “material interests” (such as economic liberals versus socialists) instead of forming separate militarized cultural blocks incommensurate with constitutional democracy based on competition, legalism, and brokering between political parties. The two dominant parties at the center also would experience competitive pressures to seek support and endorsements from regional parties.

Since varying the kind of democracy from level to level enables new kinds political complexity, competition, and organizational differentiation to emerge, it also potentially creates new opportunities for political alliances and coalitions to form across and within militarized cultural blocks -- “clashes of identities,” and “clashes” of religion, language, tribe, ethnicity, and civilization -- in the transition to constitutional government with competing political parties instead of vying militarized factions.²³ Thus, varying the kind of democracy from level to level potentially creates new opportunity structures for the translation and transition from “clashes of civilizations,” and “clashes of identities,” to cultural and ideological cleavages of political party competition and coalition formation.

A similar strategy of varying the kind of democracy from level to level in a multi-level government or federal republic to produce new kinds of political complexity, competition, and, possibly, the absorption and translation of national and regional violent conflicts into political conflict and competition may apply across other societies around the world. In the Middle East, societies in the central and eastern Middle East, such as Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, and Lebanon, have great linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity, especially compared to more monolithically Sunni Muslim Arab societies of

Saudi Arabia and much of the Saudi peninsula, and also North African Sunni Arab societies with the exception of Egypt. (Egypt and Turkey are highly culturally homogenous, though with large cultural minorities, such as Coptic Christians in Egypt and Kurds in Turkey).

Sub-Saharan African societies have tremendous linguistic, ethnic, and cultural diversity, including the remnants of even greater linguistic, tribal, and ethnic diversity of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Some observers have attributed the existence of severe civil wars and even genocide in 20th and early 21st century Africa to the countervailing forces of remaining cultural divides that do not or did not cohere with many of the states and political borders left from earlier colonialism and imperialism.²⁴ Varying the kind of democracy from level to level in a multi-level government or federal republic also may be useful to translate and absorb militarized cultural blocks and factions into political parties. As discussed, varying the kind of democracy from level to level creates more opportunities for cross-cutting political alliances across regions, across potential cultural and ideological cleavages within regions, and across the center to the regions.

Asian societies, Latin American societies, or others may be attracted to the strategy of varying the kind of democracy from level to level. This is because they may seek to increase the organizational and political complexity and competition in their societies, and also may seek to provide new opportunities for the release and harnessing of underlying cultural and ideological diversity in their societies, especially if their political systems submerge or suppress the expression of ideological and cultural diversity in their societies at the levels of national and regional politics. Societies uncomfortable with the political mobilization and expression of cultural and ideological diversity at the center or national level of their societies (possibly because of fears of nationalist chauvinism of a cultural majority dominating cultural minorities), but concerned with conflict, disaffection or non-compliance by ethnic, religious, linguistic, or ideological groups at the regional levels, may seek to vary the kind of democracy at the regional level to release and harness submerged cultural and ideological diversity at the regional levels of their societies.

Varying the kind of democracy from level to level also partly resembles some of the highly complex and irregular forms of early democratic constitutions of ancient Greece and the city-states of early modern Italy, particularly compared to more standardized forms of democracy

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in the contemporary world. The irregular and complex constitutional republics of post-tribal ancient Greece and early modern Italy partly reproduced underlying societal complexity and the multiple political factions of these societies (discussed above). Varying the kind of democracy from level to level, then, also may be a way providing opportunity structures to release, satisfy, and express underlying societal complexity, political and cultural cleavages, and ideological heterogeneity that remain unexpressed (or suppressed) in many societies around the world. This may apply to non-democratic regimes, newly democratic constitutional governments, or democratic societies that have limited political party systems that submerge underlying cultural and ideological diversity within their societies.

Political Philosophy, Theory, and Organizational Design

In the origins of political philosophy in ancient Greece and its renaissance in early modern Europe, political philosophy was more intimately connected with political and organizational design. This includes the early constitutions of ancient Greece, ancient Greek colonies established with self-consciously designed constitutions in the Mediterranean and Southern Italy, and the self-conscious constitution of the Roman Republic, including legal rights that individuals beyond its early city borders could become full-fledged citizens; jumping ahead millennia later, this also includes the conceptions and applications of a kind of balance of powers or checks and balances in analyzing and designing the constitutions and structures of republics, city-states, and “peace leagues,” especially in Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws*, *The Federalist Papers* of John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison, and the additional, interpretive writings of James Madison on the early city-states of ancient Greece, the Roman Republic, and the city-states and republics of early modern Europe, especially in Italy, Switzerland, and the Netherlands.

These thinkers, and especially James Madison, conceptualized and simplified the wide variety of complex and hybrid legal and political structures of the early modern period of Europe (and also the ancient world). Over time, however, there has been far less political and organizational variation and experimentation compared to earlier periods.

Charles Tilly comments that, “the present 160-odd recognized states cover a much narrower organizational range than the 200-odd European states of 1500, which included city-states, city-empires, fed-

erations, kingdoms, territorial empires, and more.”²⁵ Tilly argues that, “except for the relatively centralized federations and quite attenuated kingdoms, those once abundant political forms have all but disappeared.” In Tilly’s view, over the past 500 years “state-making” has moved in largely one organizational direction: “the pressures of large-scale war making, and the negotiations of large-scale peacemaking drove all European states toward” a specific organizational form, the “national state” with democratic elections. For Tilly, this “has continued into our own time, and imposed a common definition on states in very diverse parts of the world.”

In the 20th and 21st centuries, this has meant that political, legal, and organizational change and diversity has shifted more from the political realm to the business realm: This includes kinds of non-standard “network” organizational forms which create linkages and forms of collective action beyond the realms of the formal hierarchies of firms, both internally and also externally to other firms or information sources;²⁶ multi-national corporations that have exploited information technologies and the near instantaneous access to information to accomplish tasks through geographically disaggregated cooperation, thereby contributing to establishing what Thomas Friedman, inspired by Nandan Nilekani of *Infosys*, calls the “flat world” of globalization in which jobs and occupations become increasingly mobile like people, capital, and goods;²⁷ the “hyper-globalization” of distributing tasks and expertise internationally, and making tasks and functions mobile like capital, goods, information, and people; the small, nimble multi-national firms that actually vastly outnumber large multi-national corporations;²⁸ state capitalist firms that combine technical state ownership and control with the attraction of public and private equity; businesses that employ alternatives to standard bureaucratic hierarchies, as in classic examples of “quality circles” in Japanese firms in which employees, including factory workers, supervise and maintain quality amongst one another instead of through the constant contact or direct supervision of management; the self-conscious attempts to maintain less formal, open, competitive and less hierarchical formal and informal organizational structures of “start-ups” by larger firms, such as by Google, Microsoft, Facebook, Amazon and many other firms;²⁹ the part capitalist, part socialist, and successful village and township collective enterprises in China that laid the basis for the incremental, successful, and what was perceived as a less socially disturbing transition to capitalism in China.³⁰

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However, this does not necessarily mean that states cannot develop or maintain a greater degree of political and legal experimentation and plasticity, including in their political party systems, that create opportunity structures for greater competition, including by means of organizational exit, growth, and movement (discussed above).

Since, in large states, cultural and political diversity are many times suppressed by the “iron law of oligarchy” (discussed above), varying the kind of democracy from level to level to release or harness cultural and political diversity in societies, especially at the regional levels, may be especially attractive. This work creates new and unprecedented ways of doing this, new variable political geometries with predictive content. These new models of constitutions increase the competitive and democratic nature of government by creating new opportunity structures for competition between political parties, and new opportunity structures for organizational differentiation across government and societal levels. These new models of constitutions may have practical use for governments, corporations, politicians, civilians, and activists.

Political design and construction, then, may be traced back in its origins to ancient Greece, as in Solon’s pre-Socratic initiatives cancelling debt slavery, abolishing the existing aristocratic order, and establishing a class system based on social mobility. There was a “bold pragmatic manner in which constitutions [were] sometimes established for new colonies,” and a “calculating way the older tribal structures [were] deliberately manipulated with a view to strengthening the polis.” These small, humble city-states, all of which were no larger than mid-size towns in modern Western societies, not only emerged from their primordial tribalism but became a “cradle of civilization” from which the science, philosophy, religion, art, and culture of modern Western societies trace their origins.



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Notes

- 1 Gouldner, A. 1965, *The Hellenic World*, New York: Harper Torchbooks.
- 2 See e.g., Castells, M. 2000, *The Rise of the Network Society*, 2nd ed, London: Blackwell. Weber, S. 2001, *Globalization and the European political economy*, NY: Columbia University Press. Rifkin, J. 2004, *The European Dream*, New York: Penguin.
- 3 Michels, R. 1923, *Political Parties: Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, New York: Hearst's International. See also Panebianco, A. 1988, *Political Parties*, New York: Cambridge University Press. Diamond, L. and R. Gunther. 2003, "Species of Political Parties," *Party Politics*: 9: 167-199. Rohrschneider, R. 1994, "How Iron is the Iron Law of Oligarchy?" *European Journal of Political Research* 25: 207-224. Medici, R. 1990, *La Metafora Machiavelli: Mosca, Pareto, Michels, Gramsci*, Rome: Mucchi.
- 4 Duverger, M. 1963, *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, New York: Wiley & Sons. See also Riker, W. 1982, "The Two Party System and Duverger's Law," *American Political Science Review* 76: 753-766. Satori, G. 1968, "Political development and political engineering," pp. 261-298 in *Public Policy*, edited by J.D. Montgomery and A. O. Hirschmann, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Cox, G.W. 1997, *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Tufte, E. 1973, "The Relationship between Seats and Votes in Two-Party Systems," *American Political Science Review* 67: 540-554. Taagepera, R., and M.S. Shugart. 1989, *Seats and Votes: The Effects and Determinants of Electoral Systems*, New Haven: Yale University Press. Chibber, P.K. and K. Kollman. 2004, *The Formation of National Party Systems: Federalism and Party Competition in Canada, Great Britain, India, and the United States*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- 5 Following W. Riker's (1982) influential review, the pattern of PR voting producing multiple parties is sometimes called Duverger's "Hypothesis" (along with the idea that the double ballot majority system, such as in France, also tends to produce multiple parties). Riker refers to it as Duverger's Hypothesis because the generalization is viewed as less established than the principle that SMP voting generates two parties (per electoral district). Cox (1997) views Duverger's Law as more precise if it is stated as SMP generating *two parties per electoral district*. Duverger's Law may be qualified further and re-stated as Cox's "M+1 rule," i.e., that "no more than M+1 candidates . . . can be viable" in "an M-seat district." (Cox 1997: 99) Thus, in M=1 districts (SMP voting), two candidates are viable, and in M>1, multiple candidates are viable (Cox's M+1 rule thus recapitulates Duverger's formulation).
- 6 On opportunity structures, see esp. Blau, P. 1995, "A Circuitous Path to Macro-Structural Theory," *Annual Review of Sociology* 21: 1-19. Burt, R. 1995, *Structural Holes: The Social Structure of Competition*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press. On networks and opportunity structures, see Granovetter, M. 1973, "The Strength of Weak Ties," *American Journal of Sociology* 78: 1360-1380. Watts, Duncan. 2004, *Six Degrees of Separation*, New York: Norton. The concept of opportunity structure emerged in sociology to refer to how certain social structures (including networks) may create opportunities for individuals to engage in particular types of

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behavior, such as friendship, marriage, crime, or procuring information about job opportunities, business opportunities, or other opportunities (see especially Blau 1995; Granovetter 1973; Burt 1995). Peter Blau (1995: 12) once commented: “My central interest is the influence of the social structure of a population on people’s life chances, not only the *opportunities* in their careers but also their *other opportunities*, such as their chances to make friends or marry certain spouses.” *However, the unit of analysis in the understanding of opportunity structures does not have to be the individual (or individual units in networks), but also can be higher levels of organization, i.e., groups, organizations, and states.* (It may even include societies, civilizations, and species). Thus, it is also possible for social and political structures to create opportunities for groups, organizations, and states per se, instead of only individuals.

- 7 Hooghe, Liesbet and Gary Marks. 2003, “Unraveling the Central State, but How? Types of Multi-Level Governance,” *American Political Science Review* 97: 233-43. Types of “multi-level governance” within the organizational boundaries of states, and also across the organizational boundaries of states, are also sometimes conceived as variable political geometries (e.g., Castells 2000; Rifkin 2003). Organizational growth and differentiation, including different kinds of multi-level governance, and also, more abstractly, variable political geometries, also includes branching patterns: Branching patterns are fundamental to science and social science, their simulation in computer science, and many phenomena are considered or classified as branching patterns, including crystals, electric discharges, the tree of life, cellular differentiation of organisms, branching patterns of characteristics across individual organisms, branching patterns of characteristics and adaptive structures across species, languages and linguistic groups, religions and religious sects, and also group and organizational differentiation and growth across families, organizations, governments and government agencies, and human societies.
- 8 Szymanski, Stefan, and Tommaso Valletti. 2005, “Promotion and Relegation in Sporting Contests,” *Rivista di Politica Economica* 95: 3-39.
- 9 Martin, L. S. and Rokkan, S. 1967, “Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments,” pp. 1-64 in *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*, New York: The Free Press. See also Chibber, P.K. and K. Kollman. 2004, *The Formation of National Party Systems: Federalism and Party Competition in Canada, Great Britain, India, and the United States*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. On the concept of cleavages, see also Navratil, Jiri. 2005, “Cleavages in the Context of Collective Mobilization,” *Czech Journal of Political Science* 3: 247-260.
- 10 Lane, F. 1973, *Venice: A Maritime Republic*, Baltimore: JHU Press.
- 11 In principle, the idea of varying the type of voting system and government structure could produce more government structures, especially if three or more levels of government were proposed. These possibilities could be multiplied. However, for the sake of simplicity, I shall propose new types of multi-level government with commonly found voting systems (single member plurality and proportional systems). If mixed member proportional (MMP) voting is treated as a completely independent voting system from PR voting, adding MMP voting as an additional possibility across multi-level governments would increase the complexity and number of government forms possible. However, since MMP voting tends

- to produce multiple political parties as well (even if the effect is not as pronounced as with more strict types of PR voting), the consequences of having MMP voting at particular levels of government would be similar to PR, i.e., multiple political parties at that level.
- 12 This is also discussed above. On cultural diversity and cultural cleavages in India, see especially Chhibber and Kollman 2004.
 - 13 See references cited in note 4.
 - 14 Exceptions, of course, include France's double ballot majority system, or the former British colony, New Zealand, shifting to a mixed-member proportional system. Additionally, the UK varies its electoral system by the level of government (see, e.g., Flinders 2010). There are mixed member proportional systems for the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly of Wales, and the Greater London Assembly. In addition, the Scottish local government features a single transferable vote system, while representatives to the EU are selected with a PR system (until Brexit in 2019).
 - 15 An exception includes the federation of Australia, which has SMP voting across much of its federation, but, in its modern history, STV voting in some but not all of its provincial governments.
 - 16 In principle, this also could apply within levels, such as different regions or local governments having different voting systems.
 - 17 Note that it is also possible for a government's constitution to be written to include relegation as a consequence of written law, instead of as relegation emerging as a consequence of a given set of initial conditions or as a consequence of a given competitive structure.
 - 18 Conditions of an extremely high degree of social homogeneity (i.e., lacking various kinds of cultural and social cleavages), may be predicted to reduce the number of political parties. On cultural cleavages, see note 9.
 - 19 Variation in multi-level governments by common democratic governmental types (parliamentary versus Presidentialism, or an executive-legislative split) could be multiplied across the previously discussed variation in multi-level governments by the two most popular voting procedures, SMP and PR. Such combinations produce sixteen possible multi-level government forms, most of which have never been attempted before. However, these are not elaborated in this paper. Moreover, the number of types of multi-level government could be multiplied further as one increases the number of government levels. For simplicity, however, I have focused on the most popular and common electoral systems and political types.
 - 20 Cf. Tiebout, C.M. 1956, "A pure theory of local expenditure," *Journal of Political Economy* 64: 416-424. Hirschman, A. O. 1970, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Becker, G. and K. Murphy, 2003, *Social Economics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Jagger, Pamela, Bauer, Jacqui and James Walker. 2009, "Thirty-five years of scholarship at the workshop in political theory," Bloomington, Indiana, *Indiana University*, Available at: http://www.iub.edu/~workshop/publications/materials/History_of_Workshop.pdf.
 - 21 Coleman, J.S. 1970, "Social Inventions," *Social Forces* 49: 163-173. Coleman, J.S. 1990, *Foundations of social theory*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Coleman, J.S. 1993, "The Design of Organizations and the Right to Act," *Sociological Forum* 8: 527-546.
 - 22 Cf. Fukuyama, F. 1992, *The End of History and the Last Man*, New York: Free Press.

- 23 Huntington, S. 1996, *The Clash of Civilizations & The Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon & Schuster.
- 24 Luttwak, E. 1969, *Coup D'état: A Practical Handbook*, New York: Penguin.
- 25 Fanon, F. 1970, *Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Penguin.
- 25 illy, Charles. 1991, *Coercion, Capital, and European States*, Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- 26 Powell, Walter. 1990, "Neither Market nor Hierarchy: Network forms of organization," in *The Sociology of Organizations*, edited by M.J. Handel. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
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- 27 Friedman, T. 2005, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the 21st Century*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
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- 28 Gabel, M. and H. Bruner. 2003, *Globalinc: An Atlas of the Multinational Corporation*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- 29 See, e.g., Girard, Bernard. 2009, *The Google Way: How One Company is Revolutionizing Management as We Know It*, San Francisco: No Starch Press.
- 30 Lin, Nan. 1995, "Local Market Socialism: Local Corporatism in Action in Rural China," *Theory and Society* 24: 301-54.
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