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Topics & Keywords

• Procedural vs. substantive democracy

• Parliamentary vs. presidential government

• Proportional vs. majoritarian electoral systems
Substantive democracy

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Substantive democracy is a form of democracy in which the outcome of elections is representative of the people. In other words, substantive democracy is a form of democracy that functions in the interest of the governed.[1] Although a country may allow all citizens of age to vote, this characteristic does not necessarily qualify it as a substantive democracy.

In a substantive democracy, the general population plays a real role in carrying out its political affairs, i.e., the state is not merely set up as a democracy but it functions as one as well. This type of democracy can also be referred to as a functional democracy. There is no good example of an objectively substantive democracy.

The opposite of a substantive democracy is a formal democracy, which is where the relevant forms of democracy exist but are not actually managed democratically. The former Soviet Union can be characterized in as such, since its constitution was essentially democratic but in actuality the state was managed by a bureaucratic elite.

Procedural democracy is a democracy in which the people or citizens of the state have less influence than in traditional liberal democracies. This type of democracy is characterized by voters choosing to elect representatives in free elections.

Procedural democracy assumes that the electoral process is at the core of the authority placed in elected officials and ensures that all procedures of elections are duly complied with (or at least appear so). It could be described as a republic (i.e., people voting for representatives) wherein only the basic structures and institutions are in place. Commonly, the previously elected representatives use electoral procedures to maintain themselves in power against the common wish of the people (to some varying extent), thus thwarting the establishment of a full-fledged democracy.

Procedural democracy is quite different from substantive democracy, which is manifested by equal participation of all groups in society in the political process.
A parliamentary system is a system of democratic governance of a state where the executive branch derives its democratic legitimacy from the legislature (parliament) and is also held accountable to that legislature. In a parliamentary system, the head of state is normally a different person from the head of government. This is in contrast to a presidential system in a democracy, where the head of state often is also the head of government, and most importantly, the executive branch does not derive its democratic legitimacy from the legislature.

Countries with parliamentary systems may be constitutional monarchies, where a monarch is the head of state while the head of government is almost always a member of the legislature (such as the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, and Japan), or parliamentary republics, where a mostly ceremonial president is the head of state while the head of government is regularly from the legislature (such as Ireland, Germany, India, and Italy). In a few parliamentary republics, such as Botswana, South Africa, Switzerland, and Suriname, as well as German states, the head of government is also head of state, but is elected by and is answerable to the legislature.

A presidential system is a system of government where a head of government is also head of state and leads an executive branch that is separate from the legislative branch. The United States, for instance, has a presidential system. The executive is elected and often titled "president" and is not responsible to the legislature and which cannot, in normal circumstances, dismiss it. The legislature may have the right, in extreme cases, to dismiss the executive, often through impeachment. However, such dismissals are seen as so rare as not to contradict a central tenet of presidentialism, that in normal circumstances using normal means the legislature cannot dismiss the executive.

The title president has persisted from a time when such person personally presided over the government body, as with the US President of the Continental Congress, before the executive function was split into a separate branch of government and could no longer preside over the legislative body.
A huge variety of electoral systems in the world have been established along with the diffusion of democracy and the formation of political parties. In traditional local assemblies with rather homogeneous electorates until the nineteenth century, relatively simple electoral rules were used. A typical electoral system was composed of (1) multimember districts, that is, the election of more than one representative in each district; (2) open ballot, in which people could vote for their preferred individual candidates without the restrictions of lists or groups; and (3) plurality or majority rule, by which the candidates with the higher numbers of votes were elected. This type of electoral system was able to produce a consensual representation, especially in small communities with high economic and ethnic homogeneity. However, in new contexts of relatively complex and heterogeneous electorates, once lists of candidates to be voted in bloc were formed, there were incentives to search for new electoral systems able to give representation to multiple parties. Virtually all the new electoral rules and procedures that were created since the

Finally, the third group of new electoral rules implied the introduction of rules of proportional representation, which give each party list a number of seats in proportion to its votes. The early, British-style formula of single transferable vote is used in multimember districts with individual-candidate voting, although it requires each voter not only to select but to rank candidates. Other formulas of proportional representation, such as double vote and preferential voting, although they imply party lists, may be compatible with some degree of individual-candidate voting. The first wave of proportional electoral systems started in Belgium in 1899, closely followed by Denmark, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, and Switzerland around World War I (1914–1918). The development of multiparty systems led these and other west European countries to reestablish or for the first time introduce proportional representation electoral rules at the end of World War II (1939–1945).
Topics & Keywords

• Proportional OR representative AND elect* OR vot*

• Majorit* OR plurality AND elect* OR vot*

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Electoral turnout in Muslim-majority states: A macro-level panel analysis.

Authors: Stockemer, Daniel1
Khazailei, Susan1


Document Type: Article

Subject Terms: VOTER turnout
POLITICAL systems
COMPULSORY voting
POLITICAL participation
ISLAMIC countries

Abstract: High voter turnout gives legitimacy to the political system and strengthens the stability of a country. Since voter turnout matters, it is important to determine which factors boost electoral participation. While there is a vast literature on turnout focusing on institutional, socio-economic, and contextual indicators, there appears to be a shortage of scholarship on the relationship between religion and turnout. In our study, we evaluate the impact of the Islamic religion on electoral participation. Drawing on a large dataset that incorporates all legislative elections worldwide from 1970 to 2010 and controlling for compulsory voting, the electoral system type, the competitiveness of the election, the size of the country, the regime type and development, we find that Muslim-majority countries have lower turnout rates than majority non-Muslim countries. We also find electoral participation to be lower in countries where Islamic values are more strongly entrenched in politics.

[ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

Contact Information

Sections: scholarly articles are divided into sections: introduction, literature search, methods, discussion, conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Great thinkers of the 19th century including Max Weber, Sigmund Freud, and Karl Marx all maintained that religion would fade into oblivion with the end of the Industrial Revolution. However, today at the beginning of the 21st century, we can say with certainty that this thesis has been wrong. Attending church remains a popular pastime in industrialized western countries including the United States while, at the same time, new religious movements as well as fundamentalist religious groups have expanded across the globe. In addition, the past decades have seen numerous religiously motivated conflicts on various continents, be it in...
Turkish. Confronted with these entrenched religious values in politics, citizens might find it prudent to feign devoutness and to otherwise refrain from political engagement.

The emphasis on traditional values in some Muslim-majority states, including ideas about the role of women, patriotism, and the hierarchical structure of society, is not conducive to high political participation. In some Muslim states, such as Saudi Arabia, women are not considered to be full members of society (see Fish 2002). For example, in Saudi women are restricted in their rights, including the right to initiate a divorce, the right to expression (as their testimony counts as half of the testimony of a man’s), and even the right to freely choose their life partners (as they are not allowed to marry non-Muslim men, whereas men have the right to marry non-Muslim women) (see Keddie 1990; Cherif 2010). Women are also underrepresented in political offices in Muslim-majority countries. For example, women only comprise 11.3 percent of the deputies in national legislatures in the Arab states—a percentage that is nearly half of the world’s average of 20 percent (Inter Parliamentary Union 2011). These figures indicate that women in majority Muslim countries are not as integrated as men in the political process. Adding to these practical constraints, social scientists (Putnam 1996: Hall 1998; Rothstein 2001; Blaydes 2006; Hay 2007) argue that citizens in Western democracies are involved in conventional forms of political actions and distrustful of officials, government authorities, or even the state’s electoral practices. Even religious leaders criticize citizens to vote, turnout may still be low (see Table 1). However, despite these efforts, official turnout remains low (e.g., official reports of turnout figures never exceeded 50 percent in the 1980s and 1990s). Another case study by Hamdani (2009) suggests that a similar relationship between Islam and turnout may exist even outside the boundaries of Muslim-majority states. Focusing on the Canadian electorate, his study reports that Muslims are “one-third less likely to vote than the Hindus and Sikhs, with whom they share some key demographic characteristics, and about 40 percent less likely than the Jewish community which has the highest voter turnout rate” (Hamdani 2009, p. ii). Following the literature, we assume that Muslim-majority states will have lower rates of electoral participation than non-Muslim majority states. In addition, we explore the extent to which Islamic ideas are

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