

Selecting an EXECUTIVE and their Cabinet Ministers - (L.O. 2.2)

Choosing a Taoiseach & Cabinet

Taoiseach

1. Get **Elected** at Constituency Level through PR-STV. It doesn't matter what count they get in on!
2. Usually, the TD must be **Selected** as the Leader of the Parliamentary Party (though not always the case, i.e. if an independent TD was chosen, as with the example of John A Costello - Taoiseach 1948-51)
3. Once the **Ceann Comhairle** has been chosen by a vote of the full Dáil, they move on to vote for Taoiseach
4. If no party has a majority of votes to elect a Taoiseach, they must form a **Coalition** government, supported by one or more parties/independent TDs
5. In certain situations where the '*Dáil Maths*' doesn't add up, a **Minority Government** can be formed. This is what happened under the "**Confidence and Supply**" agreement between FG and FF. In this case, the FF abstained on most votes so that the number required for a majority diminished.

Cabinet (group of Ministers)

6. The **Taoiseach selects the Cabinet** from the Dáil or Seanad (Min 7 / 15 Max - max 2 from Seanad)
7. Each minister is assigned a **Portfolio** (area of responsibility). Subject to **Cabinet Reshuffle!**
8. A "**Minister of State**" or "**Junior Ministers**" is non-cabinet rank attached to one or more Departments assists a Minister of that Government.
9. Taoiseach/Ministers must receive their "**Seal of Office**" from the President before being formally appointed.
10. Operates under "**Collective Cabinet Responsibility**" - i.e. as a unit

The Government serves for a maximum of 5 years, but can **dissolve** sooner (only with **Presidential Approval**)

What Similarities and Differences can you see between these two systems that can be seen operating on the same island?

Similarities:

Differences:

Choosing the Northern Ireland Executive and its Ministers

The Power-Sharing Executive

The unique situation with the 2 communities/traditions in N.I., a special system called the "**D'Hondt System**" is needed to balance the needs of the two communities. It is a uni-cameral system (has no upper/lower house)

1. All candidates must be elected as MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly) and **must self-designate** as Nationalist/Unionist/Other.
2. Both the **First Minister** and **Deputy First Minister** are first elected as **MLAs** and are drawn from the 2 communities represented in **Stormont**.
3. The First Minister is the **Leader of the biggest party**, whereas the Deputy First Minister is the head of the **next largest party** (from the other community) Currently DUP = biggest - Sinn Féin 2nd
4. The **D'Hondt** system is then used to distribute the ministries in a proportionate manner, where the next ministry is assigned using the equation:
Quota (next job) = No of Seat the party has divided by (1+ No of Ministries already held)
5. The party with the highest number at each stage **picks the ministry** they want and **name an MLA** to act as minister for that Department.
6. Continue this process till all ministries are filled.
7. Ministers are scrutinized by an "**Assembly Committee**" in each area.

Because this is a **Devolved** Government, it can be dissolved by the Westminster and 'Direct Rule' can be imposed. If there is no functioning Executive, but the **Secretary of State for Northern Ireland** runs the civil service. (though they always maintain certain powers)

Strengths of ROI System:

Weaknesses of ROI System:

Strengths of NI System:

Weaknesses of NI System:

Choosing the President of the European Commission & (her!) College of Commissioners

1. Each **member state nominates ONE Commissioner**. But they represent the whole EU, not the interests of their own country
2. The **European Council** proposes a President of the Commission to the European Parliament (EP)
3. If elected by the EP, the Commission President selects a full **College of Commissioners**.
4. The Commission has
 - a. **1 President**
 - b. **8 Vice-Presidents** (one nominated as "1st VP)
 - c. **18 Commissioners** (post-Brexit)
5. This complete set of commissioners must then be **elected or rejected** (as a unit) by the EP
6. The Commission President assigns the **portfolios** and decides on **policy direction**.
7. The Commission usually operates by Consensus, but where a vote is needed, a **simple majority** suffices
8. Bear in mind that the European Commission is the only body that can **propose new legislation** to the EP!

The President of the Commission also **represents the EU abroad**, together with the **President of the European Council** and the **High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy**.

The President and Commission serve a 5-year Term.

Here these systems contrast starkly. The European Commission is highly **"Bureaucratic"** or **"Technocratic"**, whereas the **"Not-Democratic countries are often swift and direct to the point of violence**.

Under what conditions might the 'Bureaucratic' process be best?

Are their conditions under which the non-democratic **"Might is Right"** approach has benefits?

Executives in "Non-Democratic" countries

Each 'Non-Democratic' state varies in how power transfers and the way this works and depends on local/regional context.

The Vatican State: The **College of Cardinals** enter the **Conclave** (literally meaning 'under lock and key') to select one of their members to become the new Pope (a political and spiritual leader). It is not democratic because of its limited **selectorate**. i.e. not everyone gets a vote. The voting here is **non-transparent**, as nobody sees the process. (A halfway house between 2 systems?)

Within an **Absolute Monarchy**, the Monarch (King or Queen) is usually chosen by **'Primogenitor'** – where the first-born child (usually 1st born MALE) is chosen as the next kind. Usually advised by **'Court Members'** and/or a **Lord Chamberlain**. It usually involves a long 'line of succession' in case of the death of the current King/Queen. This is also the case in a Constitutional Monarchy, though the monarch does not act as an executive.

Military Dictatorship (Junta-committee of military leaders): Often comes about as a result of a **coup d'état** or **assassination** where the military leaders overthrow the civilian government and take control through the use of violence (or the threatened use of violence). Sometimes, the Junta uses a **puppet government** to rule, other times it **civilianizes** itself, but maintains firm control of the military.

Dictatorships: Often initially rise to power through constitutional means, but then gain control of power and become totalitarian (1 party state). All political opposition is made illegal and removed. Power might transfer to a family member (North Korea), or perhaps to a favoured/loyal Lieutenant.

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

Strengths:

Weaknesses:

For comparative purposes, consider the alternative US Electoral System...W

United State – The Electoral College System

1. A candidate for US President must first win the **nomination** of their party by voting held amongst the registered party members in the **Primaries**. In some states (such as Iowa) this is known as a Caucus.
2. After the party '**Convention**' has formally nominated the "**Ticket**" (Pres and vice-Pres candidates) they contest the 'National Elections', though the voting is **Indirect** – as each state actually votes to return a set number of members of the **Electoral College**.
3. In the US, the responsibility for conducting their elections is that of **each individual state**. Therefore, each state has unique, often idiosyncratic rules.
4. To guarantee that no smaller states are ignored by larger, more populous states, if a candidate wins a state, it wins all the **Electors** of that state (except of Nebraska & Maine). Does this disenfranchise some voters?
5. The number of Electors of a state is equal to the number of **Senators** (always 2) plus the number of members of the **House of Representatives** (dependent on population size). For example, Wyoming has 3 Electors (2+1) and California has 55 Electors (2 + 53).
6. The total number of Electoral College votes is **538**, therefore a candidate needs **270** to win. If no candidate reaches 270 EC votes, it falls to the congressional delegations in the House of Representative to decide the President (A **Contingent Election** as in 1824). The Electoral College meets between the Election in November and the **Inauguration** to conduct the formal votes. Congress then **Certifies** the vote.
7. A President selects anybody he/she likes to serve in their Cabinet. They don't have to hold elected office. Many come from private Industry. However, they must be **Confirmed** by a majority of the **Senate**.
8. Those Cabinet **Secretaries** (the US term for 'ministers') then become part of the Presidential Line of Succession. The order is 1. Vice President, 2. Speaker of the House of Representatives, 3. Senate Pro Tempore and then Cabinet Secretaries in the order in which the department was established... (Secretary of State, Treasury, Defence etc)
9. The President's time in office ends automatically at death(!), the end of his 2nd 4-year term, when removed by the Senate after Impeachment in the House, or incapacity (by invoking the 25th Amendment).

Strengths of the US System:

Weaknesses of the US System:

General Overview:

As you have seen throughout this section of the course, there is not really any such thing as a "Pure Representative Democracy" or a "Direct Democracy". Instead, each state decides on a means of selecting its Executive Branch that reflects the needs and conditions of the particular country.

What might change in any given country that might lead to a change in the way it chooses its Executives?

One of the Key Challenges in understanding the US System is the need to balance the less densely populated rural states against the more firmly democratic need to have the representation of the majority of the population. The US System has developed over time (originally, the Vice-President was the person with the 2nd highest number of votes). There is a growing move to reform/remove the Electoral College (<https://www.brookings.edu/policy2020/big-ideas/its-time-to-abolish-the-electoral-college/>). Would you support this reform? Why? Why not?

Suggestions for Reform: One of the best ways to demonstrate to an examiner that you have full understood and engaged with the different systems is to be able to make valid comparisons. Having seen the strengths and weaknesses of the different options, what would you steal from other systems to implement in the Irish System? What other reforms of the Irish system for Selecting its Executive would you suggest (perhaps in the conclusion of an essay on the Irish Government – and the degree to which it represents the 'Will of the People')? Identify 3-4 possible reforms:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Sample Short Questions: (5 Marks Each)

In the event that this topic is only being covered as a 'Short Question' it's worth your while to boil each of the first four groupings (that appear specifically on the Subject Specification) into what you think a good "5-Mark" answer would be.

In your short answer, try and balance your answer between the early steps, some of the formal steps that happen in the legislature, and some of the final steps taken

Bear in mind that you should be able to fit it into the space provided (usually a 4-line box), but remember that if you need extra space, you put any additional parts of the answer in the back of the answer booklet in the section headed "Optional Additional Page".

If you're doing this MAKE SURE YOU LABEL YOUR ANSWERS CLEARLY.

I also strongly suggest writing "**cont. on page 22**" or an equivalent phrase in the original question box).

If answering on the 'Non-Democratic' governments, be sure to suggest or name a specific country where that approach is actually taken. This demonstrates your broader knowledge to the examiners and should all but guarantee full marks for that answer!

1. Explain how the Taoiseach (and his Cabinet) are chosen? (5 Marks) (Alternative Wording: How is the Executive Branch of the Irish Government chosen?)

2. How are the First and Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland chosen? (*Alternative wording: How is the Northern Ireland 'Power-Sharing Executive' chosen?*) (5 Marks)

3. How is the President of the European Commission chosen? (Alternative wording: How is the European Commission chosen? Or How is the President of the European Commission and the College of Commissioners chosen?) (5 Marks)

* (continued on Page 22)

4. How is the Executive Branch chosen in 'Non-Democratic' countries? (5 Marks)
