

**The Impact of Particular Democratic Institutions on
Governmental Representativeness, Efficiency, Accountability, Stability and
Meritocraticness**

A Research Proposal Submitted to:
The Palestinian Independent Commission for Citizens' Rights,
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Intellectuals and activists committed to the promotion of Palestinian national interests generally concur in calling for the development of democratic institutions in the West Bank and Gaza. But while the general desirability of democracy in these territories is self-evident, which specific institutions to adopt is less so. As political history and analysis have amply demonstrated, polities may choose among a myriad of electoral, party, and governmental institutional arrangements. Assuming a desire for democracy, then, the more meaningful question is: what types of democratic institutions should the Palestinian polity adopt?

Adequate attention to this question depends on two premises. First, democracy is desirable not so much for itself but rather because it effectively embodies and realizes other, more basic collective values. Among the most important of these values are representativeness, accountability, stability, and meritocraticness. The second premise is that specific forms of democratic electoral, party, and government systems exert different impacts on these values. What is more, particular institutions may promote some values at the expense of others, such that builders of political institutions have to make tradeoffs between the realization of certain values. Thus, meaningful discussion of Palestinian political institution-building benefits from understanding the relationships between particular political institutions, on the one side, and concrete social/political values, on the other.

It is the aim of this study to examine these relationships. More specifically, this study investigates the magnitude and nature of the impact of various electoral, party, and government institutions on basic political/social values. This analysis proceeds in three steps. The first step is to conceptualize the set of (potentially) desirable values. Some of these values – such as representativeness and stability -- are generally desirable in all polities, and others are especially relevant in the Palestinian case, such as legitimate succession, the integration of anti-system parties, and the promotion of national rather than local interests. The second step is to conceptualize typologies of electoral, party, and government arrangements. This analysis, more specifically, will investigate the impacts of (a) various presidential and parliamentary systems, as well as hybrids of the two; (b) the number of parties and levels of party discipline; and (c) various plurality and proportional representation electoral systems. Finally, this study will catalogue the interrelationships among these two sets of concepts, taking into account, where relevant, contextual factors inherent in Palestinian society. All three components of this analysis will be achieved through a thorough review of scholarly literature on the topic. Fortunately, this literature represents some of the most theoretically and empirically rigorous literature within the field of Political Science. (An initial (and partial) list of the literature to be reviewed is provided below.)

It is beyond the scope of this study to derive recommendations in favor of one or another political institution. As such conclusions depend on the absolute and relative importance of the values delimited above, they are for Palestinians alone to make. It is also beyond the scope of this study to formulate original hypotheses, though such hypotheses will be suggested if they present themselves. Rather, this study might best be viewed as a catalogue of all of the hypothesized relationships between formal democratic institutions and values, which have received empirical support. Furthermore, the study will be meticulous in its citation of scholarly discussion of conceptual and causal issues, so that the study may serve as a solid basis for future analyses regarding Palestinian democratization. In these ways, this study is intended to promote concrete, informed, nuanced, and thus productive internal Palestinian discussion about the contours of a

democratic Palestinian state.

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