

Assignment # 3
June 3

1 The procedure for electing the Doge

To be described. Note that similar procedures were used for every official position in the Republic, and that tenure (except for the Doge) could be very short. Since the electoral body (which was the same as the eligible body) was about 3 000 people, most of them, over the years, had a chance at an official position

2 Analysis of the procedure

The main characteristic is the alternation of increases (by nomination) and decreases (by lot). This happens not once, but several times, and the nominations always happen (a) by a qualified majority (one half plus one of the electoral body is not enough) (b) and electors cannot nominate themselves

1. Advantages

1. The procedure will avoid the tyranny of the majority. In the nomination procedure, since a large number of people are nominated and a qualified majority is needed, some representatives of the minorities must be included, and drawing by lot will give them a good chance of staying in
2. The procedure makes it extremely difficult to strike deals. On a given stage, electors can collude on nominations, but a qualified majority is needed and vastly more people are nominated than are needed, so the random draw has a good chance of striking out the deal.
3. Coalitions lasting more than one round would require very large groups, so that after each stage there are enough remaining members of the coalition to nominate others
4. The nomination stage will eliminate people who are notoriously incompetent or universally disliked, while the drawing stage may eliminate leaders and let followers (backbenchers) form an opinion and express their views, which is a form of democracy
5. The procedure is long, but transparent, and at the end it is very likely that most members of the Senate have been involved or know someone who has been involved, which gives added legitimacy to the result

2. Defects

1. The procedure is long, probably lasting several days, and a lot may happen during the nights. I do not know whether the electors were isolated (as in the Vatican)
2. This requires a relatively small body of semi-professional electors, who are used to the procedure and know each other well, which was the case in Venice, which was ruled by a closed aristocracy.

3. Assessment

Certainly adapted to choosing one person in a semi-professional setting, gives a good chance to rational discussion, creates a sense of unanimity and reduces the risk of collusion or corruption. However:

- It seems impossible to have such elaborate procedures when the voters are numerous and do not know each other or the candidates
- Even in the Venetian case, there are other problems an assembly has to solve than electing its president, and such a procedure, which amounts to delegating the vote, would not always be practical or accepted

