ME-07 Collegial and plural executives

The concentration of supreme administrative and military authority within a single individual—monocracy—has long been justified by constitutional theorists as a structural necessity for speed, energetic implementation, and unified accountability. Yet, across deep time, varying geographic conditions, and fundamentally divergent cultural contexts, polities have repeatedly designed executive branches that are deliberately plural. These arrangements, which purposefully divide supreme authority among two or more individuals, seek to mitigate the existential risks of single-ruler governance, particularly the personalization of state power, dynastic entrenchment, and the catastrophic capture of the state by individuals exhibiting dark-triad traits (narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy).

Max Weber, in his foundational 1922 text *Economy and Society* (*Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*), formalized the sociological study of these plural structures under the concept of *Kollegialität* (collegiality)[1]. Weber theorized that collegiality functions as a vital institutional brake on the inherent, inexorable drive of bureaucracies toward monocratic domination. By requiring mutual consent and structural co-signatures, collegial bodies structurally prevent unilateral action. However, Weber explicitly warned that this diffusion of power inevitably incurs steep administrative costs in the form of reduced decision-making velocity, obscured individual accountability, and a structural bias toward the status quo[1].

This report provides an exhaustive analysis of plural and collegial executives, testing their historical resilience, their scalability from the household to the planetary level, and their vulnerability to capture by dark-triad actors. It evaluates ten historical and contemporary cases, moving from classical antiquity to modern stateless administrations, to distill robust principles of post-collapse governance.

The Strongest Case Against Plural Executives

Before examining the historical cases where plural executives succeeded or failed, it is necessary to present the strongest theoretical and empirical case *against* the arrangement. The leading critics of plural executives span from the founding of the American Republic to modern institutional economists.

The most famous constitutional indictment of the plural executive was articulated by Alexander Hamilton in 1788 in *Federalist No. 70*. Arguing forcefully for a unitary executive, Hamilton posited that "one of the weightiest objections to a plurality in the Executive... is that it tends to conceal faults and destroy responsibility." Hamilton argued that a plural executive inherently generates factionalism, which destroys the "energy" required to execute laws and defend the nation. In the event of maladministration, a plural executive allows blame to be "shifted from one to another with so much dexterity, and under such plausible appearances, that the public opinion is left in suspense about the real author"[3].

In modern political science, scholars such as Thad Beyle (2004) have echoed this Hamiltonian critique when analyzing American state governments that utilize plural executives (where governors share power with directly elected attorneys general, secretaries of state, and comptrollers). Beyle argues that plural executive systems routinely dilute a chief executive's effectiveness, paralyze swift administrative action during crises, and profoundly reduce

democratic accountability, as voters cannot determine which specific official is responsible for systemic failures[5].

From the perspective of institutional economics, Henry Hansmann, in his seminal 1996 work *The Ownership of Enterprise*, provides a devastating mathematical and economic critique of plural, democratic governance structures[7]. Hansmann demonstrates that collective decision-making is only efficient when the governing membership is strictly homogeneous in its interests. When a plural executive or a collective board contains heterogeneous interests, the "transaction costs" of governance skyrocket. Decision-making collapses into endless bargaining, holdouts, and political gridlock. Hansmann's thesis suggests that plural executives will inevitably fail—or be forced to rely on heavy, costly bureaucracy—whenever the society they govern reaches a threshold of economic or cultural diversity[8].

The Empirical and Theoretical Defense: The Unbundled Executive

Despite the immense weight of the Hamiltonian consensus, modern political science has recently demonstrated that the assumptions underlying the necessity of a unitary executive are empirically flawed. Christopher R. Berry and Jacob E. Gersen, in their 2008 study "The Unbundled Executive" (*The University of Chicago Law Review*), provide a rigorous quantitative defense of executive plurality[3].

Berry and Gersen challenge the assumption that plurality inevitably destroys accountability. They argue that creating a plural executive by "unbundling" executive authority—assigning discrete policy domains (e.g., education, agriculture, defense) to distinct, directly elected executives—actually *enhances* democratic accountability. In a unitary system, a voter must aggregate all their policy preferences into a single vote for a single president. If a voter agrees with the president on defense but disagrees on agriculture, their vote carries no specific mandate, and the executive experiences severe agency slack[3].

By analyzing empirical data from American state and local governments, Berry and Gersen demonstrate that unbundled, plural executives produce political outcomes that are demonstrably closer to public preferences than unitary executives[3]. Plurality systematically reduces agency problems by giving voters precise control over individual policy vectors.

Furthermore, legal scholar Stephen Gardbaum (2024) extends this logic to the global stage, arguing that in an era of severe democratic backsliding driven by "strongman" presidents, a return to fully plural executives is structurally necessary to check the extreme personalization of the state[11].

1. Spartan Dual Kingship (Diarchy)

The Spartan state (Lacedaemon) operated under a rigid oligarchical system co-ruled by a diarchy of two kings drawn from two distinct, rival royal lineages: the Agiads and the Eurypontids[13]. Originating in the misty period of the 9th century BCE, the system governed roughly 8,000 full citizens (Spartiates) who systematically subjugated a captive helot population estimated at 100,000.

The Spartan establishment themselves maintained that their unique system was divinely

ordained, tracing the two lineages back to the twin sons of King Aristodemus. They claimed this dual arrangement perfectly balanced power, preventing the hubris of absolute monarchy and preserving the liberty of the Spartan citizen class[15]. However, the historical and archival record demonstrates a different, vastly more turbulent reality. The record shows that the kings held supreme military command, leading armies in the field, but extreme factionalism and bitter rivalry frequently paralyzed the dual kingship. This paralysis was most vividly recorded during the reigns of the Agiad Cleomenes I and the Eurypontid Demaratus in the late 6th century BCE, where their mutual sabotage undermined state security[14]. Modern scholarship, synthesizing these views, infers that the diarchy survived for seven centuries not because it was harmoniously balanced, but because true executive power was actually unbundled and shifted away from the kings entirely, residing instead with the five annually elected Ephors and the *Gerousia* (council of elders)[16]. The dual kingship primarily functioned as a localized military check; an unwritten law evolved mandating that only one king could lead campaigns while the other remained in Sparta, structurally preventing a single general from turning the entire army against the home city[13].

Scale Ledger

Scale	Population	Status	Rationale
Household	4–10	Untried	Not applicable to micro-scales.
Hamlet/Band	30–50	Untried	Not applicable.
Village	150–500	Untried	Not applicable.
Parish/District	1,500–5,000	Untried	Not applicable.
Town/Watershed	15,000–50,000	**Worked**	Maintained stable governance over the city-state of Sparta (~40,000–50,000 total regional inhabitants including perioikoi) for over 700 years.
Region/Bioregion	0.5M–5M	Failed	As Sparta expanded its hegemony over the

			broader Peloponnese, the dual kingship failed to provide scalable administrative apparatus, relying instead on uncoordinated, brutal military suppression.
Nation/Continent	50M–500M	Untried	The system collapsed in 192 BCE before reaching this scale.
Planet	8B	Untried	N/A

Capture Test

Dark-triad capture was a persistent threat in Sparta. King Cleomenes I (ruled 520–490 BCE), demonstrating highly Machiavellian traits, successfully captured the diarchy by temporarily eliminating his rival. He famously bribed the Delphic Oracle to declare his co-king Demaratus illegitimate, forcing Demaratus into exile[14]. The system resisted permanent, terminal capture not through the collegiality of the kingship itself, but through the external check of the Ephorate. The Ephors possessed the supreme legal authority to try, imprison, and exile kings. Cleomenes was eventually declared insane, imprisoned by the state, and died under highly suspicious circumstances, reversing his capture of the polity.

2. Carthaginian Suffetes (Shophetim)

From the 5th century BCE until the complete destruction of the city by Rome in 146 BCE, the Carthaginian Republic in North Africa was governed by a dual executive of annually elected magistrates known as *suffetes* (derived from the Semitic word *shophetim*, translating roughly to judges)[17].

The Carthaginians and their contemporary observers claimed this system achieved a perfect constitutional equilibrium. Aristotle, in Book II, Chapter 11 of his *Politics*, explicitly praised the Carthaginian constitution as a superior mixed government, noting that it successfully synthesized elements of monarchy, aristocracy (weighing both wealth and virtue), and democracy, resulting in a state that was remarkably immune to internal rebellion and tyranny[19]. However, the historical record demonstrates that while the two suffetes presided over the influential Senate (composed of 200–300 life members known as the *drm*), they did not hold

the absolute *imperium* characteristic of Roman magistrates. Their power was heavily constrained by wealth qualifications and the oversight of a formidable panel of 104 judges[17]. Modern scholarship, notably the work of historians like Dexter Hoyos, infers that Carthage achieved its extreme domestic stability by completely and deliberately unbundling civil administration from military command. Suffetes managed civic, judicial, and commercial affairs, but rarely led armies. Generals were appointed separately on an ad-hoc basis for specific military campaigns[17].

Scale Ledger

Scale	Population	Status	Rationale
Household	4–10	Untried	N/A
Hamlet/Band	30–50	Untried	N/A
Village	150–500	Untried	N/A
Parish/District	1,500–5,000	Untried	N/A
Town/Watershed	15,000–50,000	Untried	Formalized at a larger urban scale.
Region/Bioregion	0.5M–5M	**Worked**	Successfully administered the wealthiest commercial empire in the Mediterranean, spanning North Africa, Sicily, and Iberia (estimated populations of 3 to 4 million) for centuries.
Nation/Continent	50M–500M	Untried	Eradicated by the Roman Republic prior to reaching this scale.

Planet	8B	Untried	N/A

Capture Test

Carthage faced severe existential threats from generals possessing dark-triad traits who attempted to leverage mercenary armies against the civilian government. The 6th-century BCE commander Malchus and the 4th-century BCE general Bomilcar both orchestrated violent coup attempts against the Senate[22]. The plural executive of the suffetes resisted these captures because they retained absolute control over the city's vast treasury and maritime logistics. By starving rogue generals of resupply and payroll for their mercenaries, the civil administration could wait out military insurrections. Furthermore, the tribunal of 104 judges ruthlessly crucified generals who exhibited excessive ambition or failed in their military objectives, establishing a brutal but effective deterrent against military capture.

3. Roman Consuls

Following the expulsion of their kings in 509 BCE, the Roman Republic instituted a collegial executive composed of two consuls, elected annually by the *Comitia Centuriata* (the popular assembly of centuries).

The Romans themselves articulated a fierce ideological narrative that the consulship was the structural antithesis of the *rex* (king). They claimed that by strictly limiting the executive term to a single year and ensuring that both consuls held perfectly equal power—allowing either to exercise the *intercessio* (absolute mutual veto) over the other—they had permanently guaranteed the liberty of the republic. However, the historical and military record shows that while consuls held *imperium* (supreme military and civil command), the mutual veto created massive friction during active warfare. If both consuls commanded the same consular army, custom dictated that they rotate supreme command on alternating days, a practice that led directly to catastrophic uncoordinated disasters, most notably at the Battle of Cannae in 216 BCE. Modern scholarship infers that while the collegial veto was highly effective at preserving elite consensus in peacetime civil administration, it was militarily fatal. Consequently, the Romans structurally embedded a legal override: the Constitutional Dictatorship, which legally suspended collegiality for six months during existential emergencies, proving that strict plural executives cannot survive high-velocity military shocks without an escape hatch.

Scale Ledger

Scale	Population	Status	Rationale
Household	4–10	Untried	N/A
Hamlet/Band	30–50	Untried	N/A

Village	150–500	Untried	N/A
Parish/District	1,500–5,000	Untried	N/A
Town/Watershed	15,000–50,000	**Worked**	Highly effective for managing the early urban core of Rome.
Region/Bioregion	0.5M–5M	**Worked**	Scaled successfully to govern the Italian peninsula through elite consensus.
Nation/Continent	50M–500M	Failed	The system completely broke down when governing an empire of 50 million. One-year terms were too short for multi-year overseas campaigns, forcing the creation of "proconsular" commands that bypassed collegial oversight.
Planet	8B	Untried	N/A

Capture Test

The Roman system proved highly vulnerable to psychopathic and Machiavellian capture once the scale of the state exceeded the physical boundaries of Italy. Julius Caesar captured the state during his consulship in 59 BCE by leveraging mob violence and physical intimidation against his co-consul, Marcus Bibulus. By trapping Bibulus in his house, Caesar rendered the mutual veto physically useless. Caesar then secured a ten-year proconsular command in Gaul, allowing him to build a fiercely loyal personal army entirely outside the collegial supervision of

the Senate, which he eventually marched across the Rubicon to destroy the Republic.

4. San Marino's Captains Regent

The Republic of San Marino, an enclaved microstate entirely surrounded by Italy, has utilized a dual executive—the Captains Regent (*Capitani Reggenti*)—continuously since 1243 CE, making it the oldest surviving republican system in the world[23].

The citizens of San Marino proudly state that their system is the ultimate safeguard of liberty, deliberately designed to ensure that no single individual or family can ever consolidate dynastic power over the republic[26]. The historical record shows that this is achieved through extraordinary temporal restrictions: two Captains Regent are elected by the Grand and General Council for a term of exactly six months. They hold identical powers, and every single executive act, piece of legislation, and diplomatic treaty requires the signature of both regents[26]. Modern scholarship infers that the system's survival relies heavily on its microscopic scale (governing roughly 33,000 citizens over 61 square kilometers)[24]. The extreme brevity of the term, combined with the absolute mutual veto, entirely strips the executive office of the time required to build patronage networks or embezzle sufficient state funds to threaten the republic.

Scale Ledger

Scale	Population	Status	Rationale
Household	4–10	Untried	N/A
Hamlet/Band	30–50	Untried	N/A
Village	150–500	Untried	N/A
Parish/District	1,500–5,000	**Worked**	Formalized when the population was in the low thousands.
Town/Watershed	15,000–50,000	**Worked**	Currently maintains sovereignty and democratic rule over ~33,000 citizens.
Region/Bioregion	0.5M–5M	Untried	Never scaled beyond 61 square kilometers.

Nation/Continent	50M–500M	Untried	N/A
Planet	8B	Untried	N/A

Capture Test

San Marino's structure is virtually immune to internal dark-triad capture. If a narcissistic or Machiavellian individual is elected as Captain Regent, they face an insurmountable structural straitjacket. They have only 180 days in office; they must secure the signature of a co-regent who traditionally belongs to a rival political faction; and upon the expiration of their term, they face a mandatory syndication process where any citizen can legally file grievances for abuses of power during their tenure. This temporal and legal cage effectively starves dark-triad traits of the oxygen (time and unilateral authority) required to subvert the state.

5. The Dutch Stadtholderless Periods

During the First Stadtholderless Period (1650–1672), the Dutch Republic functioned as a radically decentralized, collegial confederation, largely guided by the Grand Pensionary of Holland, Johan de Witt[28].

The ruling mercantile elite (the Regents) explicitly stated that this system of "True Freedom" protected the republic from the monarchical and tyrannical ambitions of the House of Orange, allowing the state to prioritize global trade, religious tolerance, and republican liberty[29]. The historical record shows that Johan de Witt successfully managed an economic golden age, leveraging probability theory and advanced finance to enrich the state, and negotiated highly complex foreign treaties to balance the major European powers[29]. However, the executive required the unanimous consensus of seven entirely autonomous provincial estates. Consequently, necessary military spending for the land army was systematically vetoed by mercantile interests who refused to fund anything but the navy[32]. Modern scholarship infers that collegial confederations are highly optimal for wealth generation, commercial administration, and preventing internal tyranny, but they possess a fatal flaw in reaction time during conventional military crises. De Witt's sophisticated diplomatic hedging collapsed entirely when the republic was forced into a kinetic land war[30].

Scale Ledger

Scale	Population	Status	Rationale
Household	4–10	Untried	N/A
Hamlet/Band	30–50	Untried	N/A
Village	150–500	Untried	N/A

Parish/District	1,500–5,000	Untried	N/A
Town/Watershed	15,000–50,000	Untried	N/A
Region/Bioregion	0.5M–5M	**Worked** (Econ)	Facilitated the highest per-capita wealth in Europe for a population of ~2 million.
Region/Bioregion	0.5M–5M	Failed (Mil)	The requirement for collegial consensus among seven provinces prevented the maintenance of a standing army.
Nation/Continent	50M–500M	Untried	N/A
Planet	8B	Untried	N/A

Capture Test

The capture of the Dutch state in 1672—remembered as the *Rampjaar* or Disaster Year—demonstrates how sudden external military shocks facilitate dark-triad capture of pluralistic systems. When France and England jointly invaded the Republic[29], the uncoordinated Dutch land defenses evaporated. The Orangist faction, supporting the young William III, ruthlessly exploited the public panic. Utilizing stochastic terrorism and mob violence, Orangist agitators instigated the lynching, murder, and cannibalization of Johan de Witt and his brother Cornelis outside a prison in The Hague[29]. The plural, collegial executive was immediately abolished and replaced by the monocratic military command of the Stadtholder, demonstrating that when a plural executive fails to provide physical security, the population will eagerly embrace a strongman.

6. Uruguay's Colegiado (1952–1967)

Seeking to permanently inoculate the nation against the strongman dictatorships (*caudillismo*) that perennially plagued Latin America, Uruguay adopted the *Consejo Nacional de Gobierno* (National Council of Government) in 1952[34].

The ideological architects of the *colegiado*, heavily influenced by the Swiss model and the

legacy of José Batlle y Ordóñez, stated that a collective executive would neutralize dictatorial intentions and embody "coparticipation" between bitterly opposed political factions[37]. The historical record shows that the executive consisted of nine members elected directly by the public: six seats were awarded to the majority party, and three to the minority party. The presidency of the council rotated annually among the six majority members, but the president held no veto and no superior authority over the other members[38]. Modern scholarship infers that the system produced profound, terminal gridlock. Without a chief executive possessing the authority to discipline cabinet ministers, and with the majority faction constantly fracturing into warring sub-factions, the state became completely incapable of responding to severe economic decline, labor unrest, and hyperinflation. The *colegiado* dispersed accountability so thoroughly that voters could not assign blame for policy failures, leading to deep public disillusionment[37]. It was abolished by public referendum in 1967.

Scale Ledger

Scale	Population	Status	Rationale
Household	4–10	Untried	N/A
Hamlet/Band	30–50	Untried	N/A
Village	150–500	Untried	N/A
Parish/District	1,500–5,000	Untried	N/A
Town/Watershed	15,000–50,000	Untried	N/A
Region/Bioregion	0.5M–5M	Failed	Operated at a national scale of ~2.5 million people but failed completely due to decision-making paralysis, factionalism, and a lack of hierarchical discipline over ministries.
Nation/Continent	50M–500M	Untried	N/A

Planet	8B	Untried	N/A

Capture Test

The *colegiado* was not captured by a dark-triad actor from within the council itself; rather, its structural inefficiency destroyed the state's legitimacy, creating a vacuum that invited external capture. By failing to provide basic macroeconomic stability or unified policy, the plural executive alienated the working class. This systemic failure paved the way for the rise of the Tupamaro urban guerrillas, whose violence in turn provoked a brutal right-wing military coup in 1973. Plural executives that sacrifice basic administrative competence in the name of representation inevitably create the anarchic conditions that justify their own authoritarian overthrow.

7. Bosnia's Tripartite Presidency

Created by Annex 4 of the 1995 Dayton Agreement, the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a three-member body comprising one Bosniak, one Croat, and one Serb[42].

The international architects of the Dayton Agreement stated that this consociational peace-building mechanism was essential to guarantee representation for the three "constituent peoples," thereby preventing a return to the catastrophic ethnic cleansing of the Bosnian War[42]. The record shows that the presidency rotates every eight months over a four-year term. Crucially, members possess a "vital national interest" veto, allowing them to instantly block any legislation they deem threatening to their specific ethnic group, forcing the issue to a constitutional court or a broader legislative stalemate[42]. Modern scholarship uniformly infers that while the system succeeded as a mechanism to end armed conflict, it has structurally institutionalized and permanently frozen ethnic divisions. Because political elites are elected solely by their own ethnic constituencies, there is zero electoral incentive for moderation or cross-ethnic coalition building[47]. The proliferation of mutual veto points has resulted in continuous, decades-long gridlock, endemic state capture by corrupt ethnic cartels, and an environment utterly incapable of executing standard economic reforms[42].

Scale Ledger

Scale	Population	Status	Rationale
Household	4–10	Untried	N/A
Hamlet/Band	30–50	Untried	N/A
Village	150–500	Untried	N/A

Parish/District	1,500–5,000	Untried	N/A
Town/Watershed	15,000–50,000	Untried	N/A
Region/Bioregion	0.5M–5M	Failed	Implemented over a population of ~3.2 million. It succeeds strictly as a ceasefire mechanism but fails catastrophically as an engine for unified governance or socio-economic development[49].
Nation/Continent	50M–500M	Untried	N/A
Planet	8B	Untried	N/A

Capture Test

The Dayton framework is highly susceptible to capture by Machiavellian ethno-nationalists. Actors utilizing dark-triad strategies do not seek to capture the *entire* central state—which the system's mathematical quotas prevent. Instead, they completely capture their *own* ethnic bloc, using the "vital national interest" veto to paralyze the central government. By keeping the national executive weak and dysfunctional, leaders like Milorad Dodik ensure that actual economic resources and patronage remain decentralized under their absolute personal control in sub-national entities (e.g., Republika Srpska)[46]. The plural executive is essentially held hostage to legitimize localized autocracies.

8. The Swiss Federal Council

Established in 1848, the Swiss Federal Council is a seven-member executive serving as the collective head of state and government.

The Swiss themselves state that this collegial body forces consensus among the nation's diverse linguistic (German, French, Italian, Romansh), religious, and political factions, ensuring the absolute neutrality, stability, and moderation of the state. The historical record shows that the seven members are elected by the Federal Assembly. Since 1959, seats have been distributed among the major political parties according to an unwritten "magic formula" (traditionally a 2:2:2:1 ratio among the four largest parties). The presidency of the Confederation rotates annually among the councilors and is purely ceremonial; the president is merely *primus inter pares* (first among equals) and holds no superior executive authority. Modern scholarship infers that the Federal Council works smoothly because it is nested within

a highly decentralized federalist system and rigorously constrained by the mechanisms of direct democracy. The federal executive is relatively weak compared to the cantons. Furthermore, if the Council passes unpopular legislation, citizens can rapidly overturn it via binding referendums. This removes the high-stakes, zero-sum nature of executive politics seen in presidential systems, lowering the temperature of national politics.

Scale Ledger

Scale	Population	Status	Rationale
Household	4–10	Untried	N/A
Hamlet/Band	30–50	Untried	N/A
Village	150–500	Untried	N/A
Parish/District	1,500–5,000	Untried	N/A
Town/Watershed	15,000–50,000	Untried	N/A
Region/Bioregion	0.5M–5M	**Worked**	Formalized when the population was roughly 2.4 million.
Nation/Continent	50M–500M	**Worked**	Currently governs ~8.7 million people with exceptional stability, wealth, and democratic legitimacy.
Planet	8B	Untried	N/A

Capture Test

The Swiss system is exceptionally resistant to dark-triad capture. The institutional culture aggressively penalizes narcissism and self-aggrandizement; politicians who attempt to build cults of personality or monopolize media attention are systematically ostracized by the Assembly and the public. Furthermore, any attempt by a Machiavellian councilor to unilaterally dictate policy is immediately overridden by the other six members. Ultimately, any faction attempting to capture the state apparatus from the top down is checked by the populace's

constitutional power to initiate binding citizen referendums, which serve as the ultimate veto over executive overreach.

9. Rojava's Co-Chair Rule (AANES)

In the aftermath of the Syrian Civil War, the Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria (AANES), commonly known as Rojava, implemented a strict co-chair system across all levels of governance[52].

The revolutionary architects of the system explicitly state that the co-chair model is designed to permanently dismantle the patriarchal state by mandating absolute gender parity in power. The 2014 and 2023 Social Contracts encode that every administrative, political, and civil institution must be led jointly by one woman and one man[54]. The record shows that, facilitated by ideological bodies like the TEV-DEM coalition and the Kongra Star women's movement, this co-chair system has been implemented continuously since 2012, stretching from the hyper-local neighborhood commune (household/hamlet level) all the way up to the Executive Council of the AANES[58]. Modern scholarship infers that the system forces profound, disruptive sociological shifts in a deeply conservative, tribal region. By institutionalizing female veto power at every single rung of governance, it structurally breaks traditional male tribal networks and patriarchal patronage[59]. However, scholars note that while civil administration is strictly collegial, ultimate military authority (the SDF) remains largely hierarchical in combat, creating a persistent tension between utopian democratic collegiality and the monocratic realities of fighting a multi-front war against hostile nation-states and insurgencies.

Scale Ledger

Scale	Population	Status	Rationale
Household	4–10	**Worked**	Embedded in local communes dealing with multi-family blocks.
Hamlet/Band	30–50	**Worked**	Operates effectively at the neighborhood commune level.
Village	150–500	**Worked**	Operates effectively at the village council level.
Parish/District	1,500–5,000	**Worked**	District and regional councils maintain

			the mandate.
Town/Watershed	15,000–50,000	**Worked**	City administrations utilize the co-chair structure.
Region/Bioregion	0.5M–5M	**Worked**	Scaled to cantons and the broader AANES administration governing an estimated 2 to 3 million people.
Nation/Continent	50M–500M	Untried	N/A
Planet	8B	Untried	N/A

Capture Test

The mandatory gender quota serves as a powerful, structural defense against dark-triad capture. If a narcissistic male tribal leader attempts to monopolize power or embezzle resources within a local council, he is continually and legally checked by his female co-chair. Crucially, this veto is not merely theoretical; the female co-chair is backed by the armed, highly organized women's movement (Kongra Star) and female defense units (YPJ)[60]. Capture is resisted because the plural executive is enforced by a parallel ideological power structure actively hostile to individual male aggrandizement.

10. Cooperative Boards (Worker Cooperatives)

Worker cooperatives are enterprises owned and governed by their employees. They are managed by boards elected on a strict one-member, one-vote basis, rather than being controlled by capital investors[63].

Cooperative advocates state that this democratic governance model ensures the enterprise maximizes collective wealth, prioritizes worker well-being, and anchors capital within the local community rather than extracting it for distant shareholders[64]. The empirical record shows that this model is highly viable on a global scale; approximately 11 million individuals currently work in cooperatives[66]. Small cooperatives operate via direct, flat-management consensus, while larger ones (such as the Mondragon Corporation in Spain) use representative elected boards that hire, monitor, and fire executive management[65]. Modern scholarship, particularly Henry Hansmann's transaction cost theory, infers that cooperative governance is highly efficient and

outcompetes traditional firms *only* when the membership is homogeneous (e.g., workers possessing similar skills, wages, and shared values). However, when members possess radically heterogeneous interests, the transaction costs of collegial decision-making skyrocket, leading to endless debate and commercial failure[8]. Empirical studies, such as a large survey of 4,134 workers in Italian social cooperatives, highlight that cooperative success relies heavily on shared leadership structures and the presence of nonmonetary, prosocial motives among the workforce[63].

Scale Ledger

Scale	Population	Status	Rationale
Household	4–10	**Worked**	Direct consensus is highly functional under 15 people.
Hamlet/Band	30–50	**Worked**	Direct democracy via assembly functions smoothly.
Village	150–500	**Worked**	Representative boards become necessary to avoid slow consensus times.
Parish/District	1,500–5,000	**Worked**	Mid-size cooperatives manage logistics effectively.
Town/Watershed	15,000–50,000	**Worked**	Large cooperative networks (like Mondragon's ~80,000 workers) scale well when united by a shared cultural/regional identity.
Region/Bioregion	0.5M–5M	Failed	Rarely scales to regional

			macroeconomic planning due to internal friction, risk aversion, and severe capital constraints.
Nation/Continent	50M–500M	Untried	N/A
Planet	8B	Untried	N/A

Capture Test

Cooperatives are structurally vulnerable to Robert Michels' "Iron Law of Oligarchy," where Machiavellian managers exploit the sheer complexity of market data and the information asymmetry between the boardroom and the shop floor to slowly capture the enterprise, turning it into a de facto traditional corporation[64]. Mitigation strategies that successfully reverse this capture include enforcing strict term limits for board members, capping executive compensation to a fixed mathematical multiple of the lowest-paid worker (e.g., a 6:1 ratio), and mandating the absolute transparency of all financial ledgers to the general assembly.

Implementability after the Fall

Implementing collegial executives in a post-collapse environment—where the state, power grid, and internet have permanently vanished—requires abandoning complex bureaucracies in favor of physical localization, low-tech administrative infrastructure, and immediate accountability. Avoiding the naturalistic fallacy is critical here: returning to a "primitive" state of small-scale survival does not automatically guarantee fairness or equality; without deliberate structural design, small scales naturally default to brutal warlordism and patriarchal dominance.

- **Minimum Viable Version:**
  - **Household (4 to 10 people):** Informal, consensus-based collegiality. Decisions regarding caloric rationing, labor division, and physical security are made by a dual-head structure (e.g., the eldest male and eldest female, echoing the Rojava co-chair principle) holding mutual veto. *Needs:* A shared hearth (meeting place) and physical proximity to enforce compliance.
  - **Village of 300:** An unbundled, plural executive consisting of three to five magistrates, each elected annually by a general assembly to manage a strictly defined domain (e.g., one magistrate for water/agriculture, one for defense, one for internal dispute resolution). *Needs:* Charcoal and plaster or notched tally sticks for grain/labor accounting; a central square for public assemblies; a physical lunar calendar to dictate strict terms of office and assembly dates.
  - **District of 3,000:** A representative council of village elders that appoints two

co-executives (similar to Roman consuls or Carthaginian suffetes) with rigid six-month rotating terms, ensuring no single village or kinship network permanently dominates the district. *Needs:* Scribes capable of basic literacy to record property boundaries and inter-village treaties on durable materials (parchment or clay); physical tokens (e.g., branded wooden staffs) to verify the legal delegation of authority.

- **First Failure to Expect:** The system will fail during the first sudden, massive external military threat (e.g., an organized raiding party of 500 men from a neighboring district). The structural requirement for collegial consensus will cause fatal hesitation in mobilizing a defense. A charismatic, psychopathic warlord will emerge from within the district, demanding monocratic command to save the population. Once the threat is neutralized, this individual will use their newly empowered, armed loyalists to refuse to relinquish power, permanently ending the plural experiment.

Conclusion

Summary of Robust Findings

Collegial and plural executives represent a deliberate, calculated evolutionary trade-off in institutional design: they purchase long-term stability, resistance to tyranny, and representational legitimacy by paying a steep premium in decision-making speed and obscured accountability. Unbundling executive power—assigning specific domains to specific elected officials—successfully prevents the personalization of the state and closely aligns policy with voter preferences. Conversely, bundled collegial executives (councils with overlapping authority) function smoothly only when nested within decentralized federal structures (Switzerland) or constrained by profound ideological homogeneity (Rojava, worker cooperatives). When applied to heterogeneous, mutually hostile populations (Uruguay, Bosnia), they reliably produce catastrophic gridlock. Historically, plural executives are most vulnerable not to internal subversion, but to external military shocks that demand rapid, monocratic command.

Contested or Open Questions

1. Does the increased cognitive load required of citizens to monitor a highly unbundled, plural executive outweigh the democratic benefits of dispersed power?
2. Can a plural executive maintain sufficient unity of command to survive the velocity of modern, technologically driven crises (e.g., cyber warfare, pandemics) without resorting to emergency dictatorial overrides?
3. To what extent does the success of collegial governance depend on culturally specific high-trust environments versus purely structural, mathematical design elements?

Sources to Read in Full

1. Berry, Christopher R., and Jacob E. Gersen. "The Unbundled Executive." *The University of Chicago Law Review* 75, no. 4 (2008): 1385–1434.
2. Gardbaum, Stephen. "The Case for Plural Executives in the Age of Strongmen." *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 24, no. 3 (2024/2026).
3. Weber, Max. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. (Specifically, Chapter 1 on *Kollegialität*).

4. Hansmann, Henry. *The Ownership of Enterprise*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.
5. Hoyos, Dexter. *Carthage's Other Wars: Carthaginian Rebellions, Mutinies and Treason*. Pen and Sword, 2003.

Principles

- **Principle of Executive Unbundling:** Dividing executive authority into distinct, domain-specific elected offices mathematically increases democratic accountability and heavily reduces the risk of authoritarian capture.
- **Principle of Collegial Friction:** Shared executive authority decreases the velocity of decision-making in direct proportion to the cultural and economic heterogeneity of the decision-makers.
- **Principle of the Monocratic Override:** Plural executives facing sudden, existential military threats will either temporarily centralize command or face systemic collapse and external conquest.
- **Principle of the Patronage Straitjacket:** Executive plurality prevents the consolidation of corrupt patronage networks only when terms are strictly limited to short intervals (six to twelve months) and require adversarial co-signatures.
- **Principle of Veto Paralysis:** Granting absolute veto power to sub-factions within a plural executive guarantees systemic gridlock unless constrained by an external overriding mechanism like direct democracy.

Works cited

1. The Max Weber Dictionary: Key Words and Central Concepts, https://dokumen.pub/the-max-weber-dictionary-key-words-and-central-concepts-second-edition-9781503600225.html
2. Staatsformen: Modelle politischer Ordnung von der Antike bis zur, https://dokumen.pub/staatsformen-modelle-politischer-ordnung-von-der-antike-bis-zur-gegenwart-ein-handbuch-9783412318109-341207604x-9783412076047.html
3. The Unbundled Executive - Chicago Unbound, https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1349&context=public_law_and_legal_theory
4. Democratic Rulemaking - Duke Law Scholarship Repository, https://scholarship.law.duke.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=6207&context=faculty_scholarship
5. Governors Turn Pro: The Institutionalization of the Executive Branch, https://olemiss.edu/archive/political_science/state_politics/conferences/2007/papers/Bowman%20et%20al.%20sppc.pdf
6. Executive Federalism Comes to America - Scholarship Archive, https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4183&context=faculty_scholarship
7. The Ownership of Enterprise - ProQuest, https://search.proquest.com/openview/4bfbfb3145e7725dcd6e52c78fae4ee4/1?p

q-origsite=gscholar&cbl=47867
8. Book Reviews The Ownership of Enterprise. By Henry Hansmann, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290691256_Book_Reviews_The_Ownership_of_Enterprise_By_Henry_Hansmann_Cambridge_Mass_Belknap_Press_1996_Pp_xi372_3995
9. The Unbundled Executive - Chicago Unbound, https://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5425&context=uclrev
10. Publication: The Unbundled Executive - DASH (Harvard), https://dash.harvard.edu/entities/publication/73120378-b9ad-6bd4-e053-0100007fdf3b
11. UCLA Public Law & Legal Theory Series - eScholarship.org, https://escholarship.org/content/qt2p31c34c/qt2p31c34c.pdf
12. case for plural executives in the age of strongmen - Oxford Academic, https://academic.oup.com/icon/article/24/3/994/8732611
13. The Bronze Lie: Shattering the Myth of Spartan Warrior Supremacy, https://dokumen.pub/the-bronze-lie-shattering-the-myth-of-spartan-warrior-supremacy-9781472843753-9781472843760-9781472843746-9781472843739-1472843754.html
14. Focus on Command: “Leonidas and the Stand of the 300”, https://warhistorynetwork.com/groups/classical-military-history-c-1000-bce-500-ce/forum/topics/focus-on-command-leonidas-and-the-stand-of-the-300
15. Gorgo, Queen of Sparta | Military Wiki - Fandom, https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Gorgo,_Queen_of_Sparta
16. GR-Unit9-AthensSpart - mmdtkw, http://www.mmdtkw.org/GR-Unit9-AthensSparta--Readings.html
17. Carthaginian Government - World History Encyclopedia, https://www.worldhistory.org/Carthaginian_Government/
18. Sufet | Carthaginian magistrate - Britannica, https://www.britannica.com/topic/sufet
19. Aristotle, Politics. Book II, Chapter 11 - Classical Liberal Arts Academy, https://classicalliberalarts.com/library/aristotle-politics/aristotle-politics-book-ii-chapter-11/
20. Aristotle's analysis of the Carthaginian Constitution - World History Edu, https://worldhistoryedu.com/aristotles-analysis-of-the-carthaginian-constitution/
21. Aristotle and the politeia of the Carthaginians - idUS, https://idus.us.es/bitstreams/ecbd4ca4-af6b-40b5-87c6-2cce418266d3/download
22. Constitution of Carthage - Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Carthage
23. The World's Oldest Continous Republic - World Atlas, https://www.worldatlas.com/ancient-world/the-world-s-oldest-continous-republic.html
24. San Marino (03/07) - State.gov, https://2009-2017.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/sanmarino/81982.htm

25. San Marino constitution: the world's oldest still in use - Peter Schulte, https://peterschulte.org/good-news/san-marino-constitution-worlds-oldest/
26. San Marino Captains Regent: The World's Only Dual Heads of State, https://www.castellidisanmarino.com/en/san-marino-captains-regent/
27. San Marino | Population, Italy, Flag, Map, Capital, & Government, https://www.britannica.com/place/San-Marino-republic-Europe
28. Dutch History - Netherlands Travel Guide - Eupedia, https://www.eupedia.com/netherlands/dutch_history.shtml
29. Johan de Witt - Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johan_de_Witt
30. First Stadtholderless Period - Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Stadtholderless_Period
31. Orangism (Dutch Republic) - Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orangism_(Dutch_Republic)
32. What is the story behind this? : r/Netherlands - Reddit, https://www.reddit.com/r/Netherlands/comments/usacz7/what_is_the_story_behind_this/
33. Third Anglo-Dutch War - Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_Anglo-Dutch_War
34. AVAILABLE FROM Superintendent - ERIC, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED056948.pdf
35. political culture and revolution: an analysis of the tupamaros, https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/bitstreams/5e4a9010-aef7-461f-b7c2-01b6adadab00/download
36. Constitution of Uruguay of 1952 - Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Uruguay_of_1952
37. Uruguay Study_3 - Marines.mil, https://www.marines.mil/portals/1/publications/uruguay%20study_3.pdf
38. Evolución de la Administración Pública en Uruguay | PDF - Scribd, https://es.scribd.com/presentation/310114698/La-Administracion-Publica-en-El-Uruguay
39. 1688-5058 CONSTITUTIONAL REFORMS AND POLITICAL ... - Colibri, https://www.colibri.udelar.edu.uy/jspui/bitstream/20.500.12008/4606/1/DOL%20CP%2002%2011.pdf
40. Checking Executive Personalism: Collegial Governments and the, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/343778093_Checking_Executive_Personalism_Collegial_Governments_and_the_Level_of_Democracy
41. Constitution of Uruguay - Wikipedia, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitution_of_Uruguay
42. TWENTY YEARS AFTER DAYTON. THE CONSTITUTIONAL, https://gem-stones.eu/uploads/publications/benedizione-scotti-twenty-years-after-dayton.pdf
43. CASE OF KOVAČEVIĆ v. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA - HUDOC, https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/tur?i=001-245359
44. CASE OF KOVAČEVIĆ v. BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA - HUDOC, https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre?i=001-226386

45. Is it time to revisit the Dayton Peace Accords?, https://studies.aljazeera.net/en/reports/2015/12/201512161644402616 09.html
46. (PDF) The Dayton Peace Agreement in Bosnia and Herzegovina, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358406614_The_Dayton_Peace_Agreement_in_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina_and_Lessons_for_the_Design_of_Political_Institutions_for_a_United_Ireland
47. Ethnic Nationalism and Democratic Erosion in Bosnia and, https://democratic-erosion.org/2020/12/09/ethnic-nationalism-and-democratic-erosion-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/
48. Stuck in the Past in: Southeastern Europe Volume 48 Issue 2-3 (2024), https://brill.com/view/journals/seeu/48/2-3/article-p173_001.xml
49. Paradoxes of Stabilisation: Bosnia and Herzegovina from the, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/196458/raport_paradoxes-of-stabilisation_net.pdf
50. Bosnia and Herzegovina and European Integration, https://unipub.lib.uni-corvinus.hu/10008/1/NielsenKristianL_2022.pdf
51. Introductory Note - Oxford Constitutional Law: Bosnia and Herzegovina, https://oxcon.ouplaw.com/display/10.1093/ocw/law-ocw-cm985.016.1/law-ocw-cm985?d=%2F10.1093%2Focw%2Flaw-ocw-cm985.016.1%2Flaw-ocw-cm985&p=emailASxZ8WlqC3zTk
52. The co-chair system - Civil Diplomacy Center, https://nescivildiplomacy.com/?p=2485
53. The Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria : Between A, https://dokumen.pub/the-autonomous-administration-of-north-and-east-syria-between-a-rock-and-a-hard-place-9781912997510.html
54. Women's Political Empowerment in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, https://ijsab.com/wp-content/uploads/1047.pdf
55. DAANES' Social Contract, 2023 Edition - Rojava Information Center, https://rojavainformationcenter.org/2023/12/aanes-social-contract-2023-edition/
56. JINHAGENCY | 'Women's Social Contract will be a model for the, https://jinhaagency.com/en/actual/women-s-social-contract-will-be-a-model-for-the-whole-world-34876
57. The Statelessness & Citizenship Review, https://statelessnessandcitizenshipreview.com/index.php/journal/article/download/565/357/
58. Administrating Rojava's Revolution: An Interview with Emine Osê, https://dckurd.org/2022/05/17/administrating-rojavas-revolution-an-interview-with-emine-ose/
59. gender relationships - the family law reforms, https://iris.unito.it/retrieve/fb3de249-eb08-4e47-97e2-c336b69865fa/Grasso_2024_Gender_Relationshio_Family_Law_Rojava_Syria_Published.pdf
60. HOMEPAGE - Kongra Star, https://kongra-star.org/eng/homepage/
61. Women in NE Syria play great role in shaping AANES structure, https://npasyria.com/en/110736/
62. 'Woman, life, freedom': the Syrian feminists who forged a new world, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/feb/09/woman-life-freedom-the-syria

n-feminists-who-forged-a-new-world-in-a-land-of-war
63. Governing cooperatives in the context of individual motives, https://www.emerald.com/ijse/article/48/2/181/157936/Governing-cooperatives-in-the-context-of
64. Corporate Governance and the Mondragón cooperatives, https://e-archivo.uc3m.es/bitstreams/312c865b-e36c-4505-be06-381c39008b18/download
65. A New Generation of Worker Cooperatives (Chapter 16), https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/cambridge-handbook-of-community-empowerment/new-generation-of-worker-cooperatives/ED25CDD581AE972EECD8AF0A07364A09
66. patterns of member participation in the decision-making of platform, https://academic.oup.com/ser/article/22/3/1335/7300933
67. Exploring institutional embeddedness and democratic governance, https://www.akjournals.com/view/journals/204/47/4/article-p445.xml
68. Member Participation Strategies and the Governance of Cooperatives, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/403973826_Member_Participation_Strategies_and_the_Governance_of_Cooperatives
69. The Internal and External Governance of Cooperatives ... - IRIS, https://iris.unitn.it/retrieve/e3835191-cbfe-72ef-e053-3705fe0ad821/Sacchetti%20%26%20Tortia%20ECSP-External%20Gov.%20Coop-LG13-15.pdf