CIVICS: Changing Incentives for Voters in International Cooperation through Sampling

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This work discusses the possibility of developing new institutional frameworks that could be used as a replacement for the current global international political organs (e.g. the U.N.) which have shown their limited effectiveness in tackling existential risk that requires global cooperation (e.g. climate change).

Any large institution or decision-making system that seeks to be democratic has to find a balance between many criteria, including three crucial ones: responsiveness, efficacy and representativity. The first criteria are easy: decisions should be made quickly, and should not be for show but have real impact in the long term. The third criterion is quite orthogonal, and often incompatible. It requires the decision-makers to either be the people concerned themselves or at the very least to make decisions in their best interest. Ideally, the decision made should be what mankind in its entirety would choose for itself if given all the time and expertise needed.

Advances in cryptography and voting theory from the past 10 years opened multiple possibilities, but they still lack a framework in which they can be used productively. The framework proposed is similar to many contemporary political systems, but a few key differences prevent many current abuses and inefficiencies by making sure that political actors at all levels have the right incentives. Like a bicameral parliament, it features an upper house composed of representatives of governments, but instead of a single lower house, each issue has its own dedicated lower house. Using software such as Random Sample Voting [1; 2], those houses can be made from randomly selected humans all over the Earth, who can be given resources and a reasonable amount of time to make an informed decision. While they are members of this house, technological features protect their anonymity, ensuring their protection from coercive and corrupting forces. This way, one can combine the expertise of experienced politicians and the representativity of the general population.

To avoid the frequent situations where elected representatives' interests are at odds with the general human interest (and to limit lobbying), a supermajority in the lower house can bypass the upper house. Although this bicameral decision system can efficiently make informed decisions, it doesn't have the ability to directly apply them, and cannot react quickly enough in case of an emergency that requires immediate attention. Thus, it is supplemented by a fluid executive committee of 5 members from varying countries. Staggered replacement of member states at short intervals, preventing influence trafficking and deadlocks. To counteract the powers of this committee and prevent abuse, automatic audits are used, and the upper house has the ability to put on trial a member of the council. The agenda-setting generally lies with the upper house, with protection against deadlocks and filibusters by having firm deadlines to propose resolutions which are then voted upon by the lower houses.

This is but one example of such a framework, some of which is inspired by a concrete proposal shown in [3]. As it could already improve the functioning of some institutions, it underlines the potential of integrating recent results and new technosocial tools and practices into the practice of institution design.

1. David Chaum and RSV Project. 2017. Random Sample Voting white paper. *Online at rsvoting.org*

2. Nicolas K. Blanchard. 2018. Building trust for Sample Voting. *International Journal of Decision Support System Technology 10(4).*
3. Nikola K. Blanchard, Olivier Pivot. 2019. A proposal for the New Shape Prize: CIVICS: Changing Incentives for Voters in International Cooperation through Sampling. *Working document archived online at https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-02273387v1*