

# Patterns of Democracy and Its Critics

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Arend Lijphart's typology of democratic systems has been one of the major contributions to comparative political science in the last decades. His differentiation between consensus and majoritarian democracies has been widely adopted and expanded by other researchers. However, it has also been fiercely debated. This review summarizes the discussion by asking how useful Lijphart's typology of consensus and majoritarian systems is as a typology of democratic systems. It finds that the typology is a useful tool to categorize established democracies but is incapable of capturing patterns beyond the scope of the original sample. This is due to Lijphart's inductive approach that cannot sever the intricate connection between culture and institutions built into the typology. Moreover, this connection makes it difficult to predict differences in policy performance

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

It is not an exaggeration to acknowledge that Arend Lijphart belongs to the most renowned political scientists in the world. He was only the third winner of the Johan Skytte Prize and his writings have incited heated debate and numerous successive studies by other authors who have explored, contested or supported his insights. The almost certain scholarly argument following Lijphart's publications are not only due to the divisive nature of his theses but also, and perhaps more so, due to Lijphart's passion for academic debate. The originally Dutch political scientist is known as a fervent defender of his writings who will miss no chance to discuss them given the chance. His major works have been carried out in the field of institutional engineering of electoral and governmental systems; he has introduced a whole new perspective on democratic institutions in the scholarly discourse on democratic theory, and has been recognized as an authority on democracy in divided societies. His engagement even went so far as acting as an advisor to the Northern Ireland Peace Process and to the South African government as well as to the commission for the design of the Fiji electoral system (Crepaz et al. 2000, Stockwell 2004, Lijphart 1985, Dixon 1997).

Despite, or perhaps because of Lijphart's innovative scholarly contributions his work has been subject to repeated and vigorous criticism. Particularly disputed are his research on democratic institutions and his finding that among established democracies two basic types exist: so-called consensus and majoritarian systems – the former being ruled by “as many people as possible”, the latter by a simple majority. In his 1999 book *Patterns of Democracy – Government Forms and Performance in 36 Countries* Lijphart demonstrates the existence of the two different types and also explores their varying effects on a vast array of economic, political and social measures. His famous claim that consensus democracies are the “kinder and gentler” forms of ruling originates from this analysis.

<sup>1</sup> I want to thank Matthijs Bogaards for kindling my interest in Arend Lijphart's work and useful advice, Frank Schimmelfennig for encouraging me to publish the initial attempt to capture Lijphart's work on consensus democracy and Hanspeter Kriesi as well as two anonymous reviewers for helpful comments. All remaining inaccuracies and errors are solely my own.

In the subsequent review I will revisit the conjectures laid out by Lijphart in the aforementioned book. My focus is explicitly on consensus democracy as an ideal type and its ascribed effects. More precisely, the growing literature on Lijphart's typology of consensus and majoritarian democracies will be structured by three questions:

1. How good is Lijphart's typology as a typology of democracies?
2. How useful is it in understanding democracies beyond the OECD world?
3. How well does it predict performance differences?

I find, on the basis of the literature reviewed, that the descriptive and theoretical contributions of Lijphart's work are very helpful and have sparked further important additions to the scholarly literature. Patterns of consensus and majoritarian democracies cannot be identified beyond Lijphart's original sample. Moreover, his conclusion on the superiority of consensus over majoritarian democracy and the prescription of the former to newly democratizing states is premature and potentially unwarranted.

Prior to addressing each of the three guiding questions of this paper, I will shortly review the evolution of Lijphart's work over the last 40 years with special attention to the 1999 publication *Patterns of Democracy*. I will finally conclude with my assessment of the criticism and its effect on the Arend Lijphart's work.<sup>2</sup>

## Lijphart revisited

*Patterns of Democracy* is not an ad-hoc establishment of a new theory but the result of decades of research. Next to the exemplary transparency of Lijphart's research, it is possible for any reviewer to retrace the steps in the evolution of the theory

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that this is not the first attempt to review the growing literature on Lijphart's work (cf. Müller-Rommel 2008 & Kriesi 2008, 43-86). However, it is the first one that focuses explicitly on consensus institutions and surveys their applicability in different environments. For a review of Consociational democracy I refer to Andeweg (2000).

on democratic systems in Lijphart's earlier writings. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the conclusions reached at the end of *Patterns of Democracy* it is advisable to start with the publication that brought Lijphart instant recognition in the political science community: *The Politics of Accommodation* (1968a).

In the late 1960s the standard model of democratic systems was the Anglo-Saxon majoritarian or Westminster type (Andeweg 2000, 514). All other forms of democratic governance were regarded as inferior and less democratic. While the former has been an assumption widely held until the late 1990s, the latter was challenged and eventually refuted by Arend Lijphart in 1968 (cf. Almond 1956, 408) when he showed that the democratic institutions of a country depend on its underlying social structure. Homogeneous and largely peaceful societies – as for example the British – could well afford the confrontational, winner-takes-it-all culture<sup>3</sup> of the Westminster system. In contrast, more heterogeneous and divided societies – as Lijphart's countrymen, the Dutch – needed an institutional arrangement and a political culture that could manage or accommodate inherent tensions and bridge internal cleavages. The Netherlands had a deeply segmented<sup>4</sup> or 'pillarized' society but was, against conventional wisdom, one of Europe's most stable and flourishing democracies in large part due to the absence of Westminster-like rules and norms. Over the course of the 1970s Lijphart expanded his theory which he now called "consociationalism" theoretically as well as empirically. In *Democracies in Plural Societies* (Lijphart 1977) consociationalism was recommended to fit all segmented societies and defined by four core elements, two institutional and two behavioral: the proportionality principle and segmental autonomy on the one hand along with grand elite coalitions and mutual vetoes on the other.

In 1984 Lijphart shifted his attention away from the cultural peculiarities of a given society to the constitutional basis of democratic systems. In *Democracies* he pits, what is now coined consensus against the previously known but differently defined majoritarian democracies. Both types are designed as direct opposites and differentiated by eight distinct institutional characteristics.<sup>5</sup> While oversized coalitions are a defining part of consensus democracies, and the opposite minimal-winning-coalitions of majoritarian democracies, they do not equal the grand coalition constituting consociational democracy which explicitly referred to an institutional arrangement as well as a behavioral pattern. On the contrary, oversized coalitions are simply defined by their structure – not the willingness of their individual members to engage into them (Amyot 1985, 185). The institutional basis of consensus/majoritarian democracy is further developed in the book that is the main focus of this review – *Patterns of Democracy*. Three main changes to the 1984 version are noteworthy. First, three more characteristics are added to and one is subtracted from the institutional definition of consensus and majoritarian systems – the presence or absence of independent central banks, corporatism, and judicial review are included while the number of cleavages represented in the

3 Actually this is the first characteristic by which Lijphart defined majoritarian democracies under which he subsumed such different institutional cases as parliamentary England, the presidential United States, and the parliamentary but multiparty French 4<sup>th</sup> republic (cf. Bogaards 2000, 404 & Lijphart 1977, 178).

4 'Segmented' is used in contrast to a society with cross-cutting cleavages that do not reinforce each other.

5 Refer to Appendix A for the revised list of the 1999 book including operationalizations.

party system is dropped. Second, the empirical scope is widened by including fifteen more countries. Third, Lijphart now claims that consensus democracies are not only not inferior to their majoritarian counterparts in macroeconomic performance but surpass them in democratic and social aspects.

*Patterns of Democracy* warrants closer inspection. The book has two main goals: describing empirical patterns of democracy and assessing the empirical performances of the identified types. Lijphart starts by differentiating between majoritarian and consensus democracy by asking the question who governs and in whose interest in cases of disagreement. His answer is that in majoritarian systems the government represents a (bare) majority of the people while consensus democracies try to be as inclusive as possible. The former concentrates power in the hands of an influential government while the latter disperses power among several partners in the legislature and executive branches of government as well as among additional institutionalized veto players, like a second parliamentary chamber, a constitutional court or subordinated state governments. New Zealand prior to 1993 is presented as the paradigmatic case for a majoritarian system while Switzerland and Belgium are the prime examples for consensus systems.<sup>6</sup>

Lijphart finds that there are two distinct patterns among his ten indicators that differentiate the two kinds of democratic systems. The first relates to power sharing – or the absence thereof – in the legislature and executive. The second subsumes all variables that point to the division of power; in other words it shows the (non-)existence of institutionalized veto players. Thus, there are actually four cells in which democratic systems can be fit: pure (unitary) majoritarian and (federal) consensus types as well as non-federal consensus and federal majoritarian systems – an inconsistency I will return to later. Lijphart spends considerable part of his book (Chapters 4-13) on the description of his indicators and discusses each operationalization in great detail before turning to the effects the indicators have on macroeconomic and socio-cultural performance. Here a shift in causality ought to be noted. Lijphart has moved from investigating the political system as a dependent variable being influenced by the underlying social structure to using the political system as a starting point to which he ascribes causal powers that shape a country's international standing in terms of economic well-being and life quality. Instead of institutions being shaped by society, they now shape society. This crucial shift of his research focus is one of the major pitfalls of his analysis which plagues the effects the identified democratic types supposedly have.

Lijphart uses the remaining chapters of his book to perform multiple regression analyses<sup>7</sup> on his 36 cases<sup>8</sup> to demonstrate that consensus democracies do not fare worse in macroeconomic performance. This widely held belief originated from the assumed decisiveness of majoritarian systems due the absence of veto players and the freedom of the government to govern without restrictions of coalition partners or an independent parliament. Thus, decisions should be taken more swiftly and

6 Note the absence of any mentioning of the Netherlands. This does not only signify a change in Dutch politics but also underscores the shift in Lijphart's definition of consociational/consensus democracies from cultural aspects to institutional characteristics.

7 He relies on the first dimension of the consensus/majoritarian difference – the executive-parties dimensions since the second, federal-unitary dimension, has almost no statistical effects.

8 Often not all countries can enter the analysis as cases – depending on the availability of data for each indicator.

will not be delayed during the implementation phase. Moreover, Lijphart goes on to show that consensus systems are superior democratic and social performance. They are more egalitarian, have higher female representation rates, and rely on a less punitive system of justice. Lijphart famously assumes them to be “kinder and gentler” forms of government and recommends the adoption of their institutions in any state and society that has the possibility to alter its basic framework – independently of its social structure.

In the preceding lines I have attempted to summarize Arend Lijphart’s research<sup>9</sup> on democratic systems with special regards to the culmination of his efforts in *Patterns of Democracy*. Moreover, I have tried to point to the shifts in causal direction as well as theoretical foundations of fundamental concepts over the course of more than thirty years of research. Such shifts are neither illegitimate nor objectionable by themselves; however, they can come back to haunt a typology when prescribing certain types to new settings on the basis of spurious causal effects. Before I will return to these issues, I will try to answer how good Lijphart’s differentiation between majoritarian and consensus democracies serves as a typology of democratic systems.

### **Lijphart’s Typology of Democracies as a Descriptive Tool**

In order to judge the analytical value of a typology, standards or expectations need to be formulated. Lehnert describes the purpose of typologies to serve “as conceptual tools to simplify and order complex social phenomena such as political systems...” (2004, 62). In order to achieve this goal the identified types should ideally be “mutually exclusive and exhaustive” (George & Bennett 2005, 238). In other words, every case should fall into one category, and one category only, and within-type variation should be small. Another criterion by which a typology can be assessed is its scope. The more general a typology is, the more it loses “discriminatory capacity” (Fuchs 2000). Here the judgement is not absolute but relative depending on whether the task is to differentiate in terms of depth or breadth. Finally, typologies can be derived deductively or inductively. Again, no pre-defined standard for judging the superiority of one over the other exist. However, empirical typologies have difficulties in explaining causal regularities (Lehnert 2004, 67). In the following I will try to evaluate Lijphart’s typology of democratic systems in light of the discussed criteria. I will begin by assessing the exhaustiveness of his types.

For a long time political scientists categorized democracies into presidential and parliamentary democracies. Such a simple typology was able to encompass almost all democratic regimes existing at that time but its “discriminatory capacity” was quite low. Countries such as Germany and England or France and the United States were grouped together. Lijphart’s suggestion is more exhaustive than the previous standard but still has difficulties to separate important institutional differences. First, the treatment of presidential systems is awkward. Second, Lijphart’s majoritarian-consensus divide may be too simple. Third, the mixture of behavioral and institutional

characteristics empirically increases the number of dimensions in which democracies can be grouped without a theoretical basis. Fourth, states which practice direct democracy do not easily fit into either consensus or majoritarian systems.

Lijphart’s inductive approach leads to the exclusion of presidentialism, a key dimension in several typologies of democratic systems (cf. Shugart & Carey 1992, 15; Fuchs 2000, 41; Lijphart 1999, 116-142). Lijphart justifies this omission by arguing that the real question for a differentiation between consensus and majoritarian systems is how influential the executive is vis-à-vis the legislature. However, semi-presidential systems and shifting parliamentary majorities in presidential systems make their classification quite difficult. Lijphart decides to abandon the classical typology altogether and relies on the empirical executive dominance index based on cabinet duration instead (Lijphart 1999, 127-9). This choice seems to be motivated by a bias towards parliamentary systems<sup>10</sup> and becomes questionable when considering its empirical justification, since only one third of all democratic systems in the world are parliamentary, while the other two thirds are presidential or semi-presidential (Fuchs 2000, 40). Lijphart has argued that presidential systems are theoretically strongly related to his conception of majoritarian democracies despite the fact that they seemingly stress the separation of powers between legislative and executive (2008, 141). Yet, presidential systems pose a major difficulty to his typology because they cannot be captured by his executive dominance index. Personal estimates by the author are needed to fill the gap. Roller comments that “owing to his [i.e. Lijphart’s] knowledge of the political systems in individual nations, one can certainly argue that his data corrections are plausible. Yet, the need for such correction is a sure sign that the measurement concepts themselves are inappropriate” (Roller 2005, 116). Tsebelis (2002, 111) adds that “eleven out of thirty-six countries in Lijphart’s study are assigned impressionistic values of the executive dominance index because the duration of their governments expressed as the average of the two measures [of government duration] had nothing to do with a balance of power between legislative and executive.” While sharply criticizing the choice of empirical indicators, Tsebelis praises Lijphart for his theoretical “intuition that different political systems (presidential as well as parliamentary) should be ranked with respect to ‘executive dominance’” (115). Lijphart’s insight holds despite the fact that the correlation between cabinet duration and executive dominance is spurious. Rather agenda setting power of institutional actors is the decisive predictor of executive dominance (220). Empirically, Lijphart’s executive dominance indicator can be improved as Roller shows (2005, 116ff.) thus facilitating the treatment of presidential institutions. Theoretically, Lijphart’s typology is superior to a simple presidential/parliamentary differentiation as Kaiser argues (1997, 423): “Both parliamentary democracy and presidential democracy are typological tools which do not match the complexity of institutional arrangements in real democratic political systems in such a way that causal relationships can be satisfactorily modeled.” Tsebelis veto player theory (2002) might be able to discriminate more clearly between individual cases. However, it is not really a full-fledged typology of democratic systems but only orders them along a continuum of veto players. Furthermore, it can only predict policy stability. In

<sup>9</sup> Lijphart’s research is far more encompassing and cannot be done justice to in a few paragraphs. I still hope I pointed out the most general and crucial points. For a similar review refer to Lane and Ersson (2000, 207-13).

<sup>10</sup> In Lijphart’s analysis only six out of thirty-six cases are presidential systems (Lijphart 1999, 119).

sum, Lijphart's intuition needs empirical improvement but is theoretically superior to the previous standard and more widely applicable than alternative approaches.

That his one-dimensional conception of democracies only provides room for majoritarian and consensus systems at either end is another issue Lijphart has been criticized for. The first one to point out Lijphart's misspecification of the majoritarian definition as the opposite to consensus democracy and an end point in the spectrum of democratic system was Nagel (Nagel 2000; Powell 2000, 136/7). While pondering about the question why the 1993 vote of New Zealand's citizens to adopt a mixed-member-proportional voting system did not lead to more consensual outcomes, Nagel detected that Lijphart actually missed an intermediate step, and consequentially, defined majoritarian democracies incorrectly. In most cases Lijphart's majoritarian democracies are rather pluralities, i.e. the governing party had not received a simple majority but a plurality of votes. Thus, a true majoritarian system is one in which a government actually had a majority while a consensus system is one with an oversized majority. If such definitions were adopted majoritarian systems would rather be at the midpoint of a democratic systems' continuum than at one end (Nagel 2000, 119). Nagel attributes Lijphart's inadvertence to the inductive, misleading equation of the Westminster type with majoritarian government.<sup>11</sup> Since the majoritarian-consensus typology is continuous it can place actual electoral majorities between the two endpoints. However, a country like Germany is then considered as consensual despite its history for small majorities instead of grand coalitions. While in the German political system compromise is often forced by countervailing political forces on multiple levels of government which possess veto-powers<sup>12</sup>, its score on the executive-parties dimension alone makes it less of a consensus democracy and more of an in-between type. Several scholars have therefore questioned Lijphart's implicit combination of the executive-parties and federal-unitary dimensions into an effectually one-dimensional (consensus-majoritarian) interpretation.

Originally, Lijphart had expected a one-dimensional map of democracies consisting of consensus and majoritarian types. In contrast his empirical results reveal a two-dimensional space with consensus-unitary (Sweden), majoritarian-unitary (United Kingdom), consensus-federalist (Switzerland), and majoritarian-federalist (United States) types (Kriesi 2008, 63-4). Nevertheless Lijphart sticks to the juxtaposition of two types. This insistence has invited critics to lament the absence of a theoretical justification for and a systematic connection of the two dimensions (Roller 2005, 100). Lijphart (1999, 248) explains the fact that most consensus democracies are unitary and not federal states by referring to Goodin's differentiation in which power is divided within and between institutions (1996). Hence, the degree of power diffusion/concentration which can be expressed by formal rules as well as actors' behavior remains the fundamental and only dimension of democracies. Alternatively, Roller explicitly differentiates between formal majoritarian and consensus systems on the one hand and informal ones, i.e. those

11 In order to avoid confusion I will stick to Lijphart's 'misnomer' throughout this paper and refer to majoritarian democracies as Lijphart has described them.

12 Germany's higher chamber the Bundesrat can veto legislation and has often done so when dominated by the opposition. Furthermore, Germany's supreme court has not been dormant when it comes to rejecting legislative proposal. On the federal-unitary dimension Germany is actually the most consensual/federal country in Lijphart's study (1999, 248).

grounded in cultural or behavioral unwritten rules, on the other (101 ff.).<sup>13</sup> However, such criticism ignores that Lijphart's executive-parties dimension<sup>14</sup> includes and critically depends on the electoral system, clearly a formal institution (Taagepera 2003). In essence, Lijphart's two dimensions do not show the difference between formal and informal rules, although the executive-parties dimension includes more actor-related than formal institutional indicators. The typology rather mixes them and measures something essentially different than most purely institutional typologies (Fuchs 2000). Connecting the three democratic types sketched by Nagel with a new two-dimensional measure of democratic systems, consisting of the electoral system and veto-points, Ganghof (2005) overcomes some of the self-imposed limits by Lijphart that derive from the conflation of behavioral and institutional aspects. Ganghof's typology is able to explain the stability of minority rule in Scandinavia, exactly because institutional and behavioral characteristics are separated, and it can differentiate between supermajoritarian, i.e. Lijphart's consensual, and majoritarian, i.e. Nagel's majoritarian, systems, a feat Lijphart's typology cannot perform. Unfortunately, Ganghof's typology excludes presidential systems *à priori*, thus limiting its applicability. In his dichotomous typology of democratic visions as expressed by electoral systems Powell (2000) differentiates between majoritarian and proportional types and also includes a mixed category. His approach can easily incorporate presidential democracies and is not subject to the confusion of Lijphart's multidimensional results. A judgment about the superiority of one typology over the other is difficult. The question is whether democracies can be reduced to electoral rules. Taagepera, for example, doubts the direct causal effect of electoral arrangements on other system characteristics (2003, 7; cf. Sartori 1984), thus supporting Lijphart's more exhaustive approach. Another question is whether the federalist-unitary dimension is an essential building block of democracy in terms of division of powers or is it only a consequence of a country's size. If the former holds, the federal-unitary dimension needs to be considered an important part of a democratic typology and Lijphart needs to better account for the unitary-consensus and federal-majoritarian cases; if the latter is true, the second dimension could be dropped and Lijphart's typology would be one-dimensional after all.<sup>15</sup>

When asking Swiss citizens or political scientists about the defining element of their political system the answer will most likely be: direct democracy (Kriesi 2008, 65). In Lijphart's account Switzerland epitomizes consensus democracy without the incorporation of direct democratic institutions. Grofman supports the finding that there is no systematic link between the two-dimensional typology and direct democracy (2000, 53). However, Vatter disagrees and shows a theoretical and empirical link between direct democracy and Lijphart's framework (2009).

13 Müller-Rommel et al. (2008) argue that typological approaches should be replaced by an explicitly multidimensional analysis. They differentiate between three dimensions of power-dispersion/concentration making actor-constellations explicit. However, they only concentrate on parliamentary democracies in Eastern-Europe.

14 Roller points out that the executive-parties dimension is a misnomer because it includes interest groups, neither an executive characteristic nor a party and thus leads to the incorporation of another, theoretically incompatible, dimension.

15 Interestingly Lijphart drops the second dimension when assessing the effects of consensus and majoritarian types on system performance as it does not exhibit any statistical effect except on inflation (Lijphart 1999, 265 ff.) which was widely attributed to the central bank independence variable.

First, direct democratic institutions need to be disaggregated into controlled or passive and uncontrolled or active referendums. The former can only be launched by the government and thus relate to the power-concentrating characteristics of majoritarian democracy while the latter can be initiated by citizens and confirm to the power-dispersing characteristics of consensus democracy (128-9). Additionally, the majorities required to pass a referendum can be related to the consensus-majoritarian spectrum. Simple majorities adhere to the majoritarian framework while qualified or super-majorities are consistent with the power-sharing of consensus democracy. Following these original considerations Vatter suggests a systematic relationship to Lijphart's executive-unitary dimension and indeed finds a third dimension in addition to the two identified by Lijphart (145) among 23 advanced OECD countries from 1997-2006. Despite profound alterations to the operationalization of Lijphart's original indicators, the main finding of Lijphart's study is reproduced. While the restricted temporal and spatial scope of the analysis is not addressed at all, this expanded typology seems to better differentiate between types of democracy and is thus more exhaustive than Lijphart's original proposition.

In sum, Lijphart's consensus/majoritarian framework is more exhaustive than its predecessor the parliamentary/presidential typology and therefore a major step forward (Armingeon 2002, 82). However, it struggles to empirically assess presidential systems. Lijphart's typology also does not satisfactorily differentiate between pluralities, majorities, and supermajorities or between various systems of direct democracy. Furthermore, the consensus-majoritarian divide is blurred by two empirical dimensions. Alternative suggestions are either less exhaustive (Powell 2000) or restricted to parliamentary democracies (Ganghof 2005; Müller-Rommel et al. 2008). Roller's (2005) and Vatter's (2009) suggestions are more exhaustive but they rather extend Lijphart's original framework instead of replacing it – although significant improvements in terms of the validity of the underlying empirical indicators are made.

Another criterion closely connected to the exhaustiveness of a typology is its ability to place cases into one category and category only. I will discuss the inherent tension between the consensual and majoritarian division on the one hand and the two empirically identified dimensions on the other. Important cases, like the United States (Roller 2005, 100), and India (Lijphart 2008, 42 ff.), display diverging trends on the two empirical dimensions. Moreover, the most consensus democracies are unitary states. Lijphart's identification of consensus or majoritarian types then mainly depends on his executive-parties dimension.

As reported above, Lijphart's empirical analysis has not fulfilled his theoretical expectations (Kriesi 2008, 63-4). The consensus-majoritarian ideal types are ordered along two dimensions with federalism as a vertical and executive-parties configurations as a horizontal division of powers. The United States' political system which is strongly majoritarian in terms of their electoral rules (disproportional), cabinet make-up (one party) and party-system (two-party), is not only difficult to classify because of its presidential features but also scores the second highest power-dispersion rank on the federal-unitary scale (Lijphart 1999, 248). Despite the fact that Germany and the United States have almost the same score on the federal-unitary dimension, the United States is identified as a majoritarian and Germany as a consensus type due to their distance on the executive-parties

dimension. However, Kaiser even argues that the executive-legislative relations in the United States which force political actors to compromise are understated by Lijphart, thus making the United States more majoritarian than it actually is (1997, 431).

India has mainly been described as majoritarian democracy due to its electoral system – the heritage of British colonialism. Due to its enormous size and ethnic heterogeneity it had been organized as a federal state from independence onwards with sizable autonomy and minority protection rights inscribed in its institution (Lijphart 2008, 44-50). Furthermore, the Congress party, the dominating political force in India has been an example of an oversized majority combining multiple societal groups under its rule. Lijphart's opponents argue that one-party, plurality cabinets, the highly disproportional electoral system and very centralized federal arrangements point to a clear case of majoritarian democracy (44). Kriesi reports that more recent developments, like the creation of more dispersed coalition governments in India, support Lijphart's conclusion (2008, 79). However, Wilkinson (2000) shifts the perspective to the state level and to actual policies and concludes that Lijphart's assessment is wrong because it misses these important details.

Essentially, two important cases like the United States and India cannot be easily fit into Lijphart's typology. Either, both empirically identified dimensions are applied in unison, then India is more convincingly made a consensus democracy but the United States remain a mixed case, or the executive-parties dimension is assigned a higher weight,<sup>16</sup> making India's placement more difficult. Fuchs goes as far as to state that it is impossible to assign any given case to a clear majoritarian, consensus or in-between type if a clear theoretical framework is not applied a priori (2000).<sup>17</sup> In short, Lijphart's inductive analysis is not reconciled with his theoretical propositions and thus blurs the boundaries between the two (or four) types of democracies. It could be that Lijphart's suggestion is so popular because it does not preclude the possibility of being theoretically more stringent by including all four identified types but also allows the powerful language of consensus and majoritarian democracies. An analytically valuable typology should opt for the former; a recipe for practical application probably needs the latter.

## Broadening the Empirical Scope

The use value of a typology does not only depend on its capability to include all important types and to differentiate as clearly as possible between them, it also needs to be judged by its applicability to various empirical contexts. The level of generality of a typology is however inversely related to its level of detail (Sartori 1970). Following the third wave of democratization, democratic regimes are now found across the globe (Huntington 1991). However, due to Lijphart's inductive analysis, his typology cannot capture patterns of democracy in Eastern Europe as well as Asia and only coarsely describes single cases in Southern Africa.

<sup>16</sup> The executive-parties dimension seems to be more decisive in classifying a case into consensus or majoritarian types since Lijphart considers Belgium as one of the prime examples of consensus democracy, although it receives the mean scores on the federal-unitary dimension (1999, 34 ff. & 248).

<sup>17</sup> More cases that are difficult to fit are discussed by Lane & Ersson (2000, 221).

Lijphart's choice of countries that have been democratic for at least 19 years seems to be a bit arbitrary at first (Müller-Rommel 2008, 88). It becomes more understandable when taking into account that Fortin (2008) fails in her attempt to replicate Lijphart's findings for Eastern Europe. Not only do the two dimensions of democracy not emerge in a statistical analysis of nineteen post-communist states but the key features of the two blocs either lose their connection or their relationship takes the opposite direction. For example, a multi-party system is positively correlated with executive dominance in Eastern Europe, reversing Lijphart's findings (206). This relationship is supported by Roberts' (2006) observation that the original sample coefficients weaken upon the introduction of Eastern European countries. However, the inclusion of Russia, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, not exactly democratic frontrunners, into the study should be noted. Fortin relies on those three states due to the fact that there is little variation on the majoritarian side of her sample. Removing these three cases does not move the picture closer to Lijphart's insights but alters her results independently. In her conclusions Fortin (2008, 216) points out that the difference in results most probably accrues from different cultural prerequisites: "[C]onstitutional engineers ... did not build institutions from scratch after a transition." In other words, she seriously questions the applicability of Lijphart's models in different cultural settings.

This conclusion is reinforced by Spinner (2007, 24) although he cautions against premature judgments based on too little democratic experience in Fortin's sample. Drawing on personal interviews with MPs from East Germany and Hungary he carefully delineates the process of building or adopting new institutions after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In essence his study shows that "elite political culture is not consensualist despite the largely consensus-democratic institutional setup." (10) Institutions are shaped by collective memories of "deep impact historical junctures" (12).

A similar non-finding is described by Croissant and Schächter (2009). The authors analyze nine democracies across Asia from the late 1980s to 2005. Lijphart's framework is adopted with the exception of the interest groups indicator since no reliable data on the countries under investigation were available. Neither the executive-parties nor the federal-unitary dimension can be found in Asia. Rather single indicators show negative correlations and thus do not go together in Asia. Moreover, indicators of the first dimension, as the number of parties, seem to be connected to variables of the second dimension, like the level of decentralization. Although their findings should be taken with a grain of salt, as Croissant and Schächter admit themselves, due to the small number of cases and the short time period that is covered by their investigation, insights are not implausible. They may partially depend on the influence of contextual or historical factors as well as on elites trying to secure power positions against challengers.

Cranenburgh and Kopecký investigate states in Southern Africa for consensus and majoritarian patterns of democracy (2004). They do find related structures of formal institutions but cannot find regularities on the more informal executive-parties dimension. Furthermore, when investigating the workings of South Africa as a consensus democracy contextual forces and historical pathways exert a considerable influence on how the political system actually works. The study suffers from similar limitations as the studies above: the restricted number of cases, the short period of investigation, and the application of

Lijphart's framework new democracies, instead of established ones. However, the insights from the case study confirm the difficulties of applying Lijphart's typology outside the OECD world. In another in-depth investigation on Namibia, Cranenburgh (2006, 601) notes that "political culture and elite behavior [...] should count as the most important independent variables in [dominant one-party] system[s]" as found all over Africa. She fully reassesses Namibia's political systems along Lijphart's 1999 typology and finds mixed results in the institutional setup. Although some consensual features are present, the one-party dominance in many African states makes the institutionalist majoritarian-consensus framework inept to classify African political systems (601-2).

Vatter (2002) explores an alternative expansion of the empirical scope by applying Lijphart's major insights to the subnational level of Swiss cantons. Whereas Vatter's study is inspired by Lijphart's typology (29), it does not adopt it. Rather the interest groups and central bank variables are dropped along with the federal-unitary dimensions. Direct democracy institutions are included into the analysis and two factors that separate between formal institutions or "rules in form" and informal ones or "rules in use" (399) are found. When assessing policy performance, Vatter relies on "more or less" formal institutions as explanatory variables to avoid the spurious influence of cultural variables (28). A similar approach is applied to the German 'Länder' by Freitag and Vatter (2008). Lijphart's typology serves as the starting or inspirational point to both analyses but has to be adapted to the differing institutional preconditions of the subnational level.

Lijphart's typology of democratic systems has been inductively derived by analyzing established democracies which are mainly OECD members. It is based on actor-behavior dependent and formal institutional indicators. While this has been recognized as a major step in the right direction (Kaiser 1997), ironically it makes it more difficult to generalize Lijphart's typology. As it was originally intended to be applied to nation-states, it is no surprise that it needs to be altered to comparisons on the subnational level. Its types are also influenced by cultural norms, historical pathways, and contextual circumstances. Implicitly shaped by these background factors Lijphart's typology seems to be incapable to capture patterns of democracy outside the scope of his original sample.

## From (Disputable) Prediction to Prescription

Throughout his career, Lijphart has not only attempted to describe patterns of democracy, but he has also been an advocate of implementing consensus institutions in newly-constituted democracies. The recommendation was originally based on the inclusive nature of consensus institutions that help to stabilize divided societies but has been extended to all countries independent of their social structure (1999, 302). This expansion of the applicability of consensus democracy was motivated by Lijphart's assessment of performance of the two diverging indicators revealing the "kindler, and gentler" (275 ff.) character of consensus democracies. This prescription has provoked continued criticism by scholars who have challenged the predictive capability of Lijphart's typology. I will try to disentangle the debate by reviewing three main concerns: first, metatheoretical criticism aimed at the predictive power of Lijphart's inductive typology; second, questions about the validity and accuracy of Lijphart's conclusions on institutional

performance; and third, the balance of two basic democratic premises: inclusion and accountability. When reviewing these issues I will try to be explicit about the kind of performance that is assessed and on which prescription of consensus democracy is based: stability in divided societies on the one hand, and economic or public policy performance on the other (Lijphart 1999, 302). Again Lijphart's inductive approach sheds doubt on his unlimited prescription of consensus institutions.

On a metatheoretical level, Fuchs argues that the empirically driven executive-party and federal-unitary dimensions are not satisfactory if one wants to predict system performance. An unconsidered outlier case may have a very strong effect on performance but is brushed aside by the majority of 'regular' cases (2000, 30-1).<sup>18</sup> Fuchs suggests developing a strong theoretical framework that clearly differentiates between formal institutions and institutional actors' behavior. The criticism is echoed by Lehnert who discusses the importance of the relevance of traits shared by different cases. Relevance, which can only be established theoretically, cannot be considered synonymous with shared traits which are revealed by the inductive measurement of a typology (2007, 67).

Regarding the applicability consensus democracy to divided societies, Bogaards points out another theoretical problem originating from the mixture of normative and empirical types that have developed over the course of Lijphart's career. Bogaards disentangles the intricate connections between normative consociational and majoritarian types on the one hand and their empirical counterparts on the other on top of the latest empirical addition of the consensus/majoritarian differentiation. He concludes:

The normative typology is incongruent with, cannot be derived from and cannot be grounded in the empirical typology of democratic systems. This implies that Lijphart's recommendation of consociational democracy as against majoritarian democracy for plural societies does not derive from and cannot be supported with his empirical analysis of the performance of these types of democracy in plural societies (2000, 417).<sup>19</sup>

Most critical reassessments regarding the claim of the superiority of consensus over majoritarian systems have been directed at the actual measurement of its performance. Surprisingly such a measurement is missing for the application of consensus democracy to divided societies. Although consensus democracy is related to consociational democracy (Bogaards 2000, 412-13) it cannot be recommended to constitutional engineers, for there is no empirical evidence for its success in plural societies.<sup>20</sup> Only recently, Norris (2008) has thoroughly assessed individual elements of consensus democracy but not the applicability of the whole type. Furthermore, concerns have been raised about a possible tautological relationship. Lijphart's inductive typology could have shown patterns of consensus democracy exactly because a more consensual culture has led to the introduction of consensus

18 In Lijphart's defense it must be said that he tests his assumptions with and without outliers (1999, 275-93).

19 For a chronological form of all typologies refer to Appendix B where all types are listed. Almond is included in that list as it is his work that Lijphart derived his first typology from.

20 One cannot differentiate between consensus and majoritarian systems as all of them were tested in stable democracies. Nevertheless Lijphart actually does test the influence of the executive-parties dimension and finds support for this thesis that consensus democracies stabilize countries. However, the findings cease to be statistically significant after other factors are controlled for (1999, 271).

institutions. As Bogaards (2000, 410) points out, Lijphart himself explicitly mentions such a causal relation (1998, 108). This inverse relation would explain why patterns of consensus structures are so difficult to identify in other world regions. Concerning the causal powers attributed to consensus democracy to spread consensus, Blondel (1995, 23) describes the "erosion of the reality of consensus politics in a number of polities." The possibly spurious relationship between institutional setup and cultural effect should be included in thoughts about constitutional engineering.

In *Patterns of Democracy* Lijphart focuses on the policy performance of majoritarian and consensus types instead their contribution for stabilizing divided societies. Lijphart counter-intuitively finds that consensus democracies are not inferior in terms of macro-economic performance and have the much better record when it comes to social and democratic assessments (1999, 301). Here his critics can be found in the highest number. They are especially concerned with the connection of corporatism and independent central banks to the overarching type of consensus democracy, but also lament case and indicator selection as well as the insignificance of the federal-unitary dimension.

When Lijphart concludes that consensus democracy is superior to majoritarian democracy, he does not mention that his results were only replicable on the executive-parties dimension. The federal-unitary dimension only reveals a relationship between consensus democracies and lower inflation but exhibits no difference on all other indicators. Lijphart (1999, 272) cites conventional wisdom which does not "concern itself explicitly with the federal-unitary dimension" in order to justify testing only one dimension. However, leaves two important arguments unmentioned. First, if only the executive-parties dimension, which measures behavioral or informal institutional characteristics, is responsible for the superior performance of consensus democracies, then prescription of consensus over majoritarian institutions becomes more difficult or even impossible. As Rein Taagepera points out the indicators used to measure the concepts on this dimension cannot be altered by constitutional engineers (2003, 7). Second, consensus democracies as complete types might not be responsible for performance but rather two of its individual components, namely corporatism and independent central banks (Anderson 2001; Armingeon 2002). The addition of these two concepts to differentiate between consensus and majoritarian types in *Patterns of Democracy* is not only conceptually questionable but also the main driving force for the suggested superiority of consensus democracies in macro-economic performance.

Rein Taagepera stresses the conspicuous absence of a logical connection between 'interest groups' and the remaining four concepts constituting the executive-parties dimension (2003; cf. Policzer 2000, 838). He speculates that the connection may be that number of parties plus number of interest groups should be stable in any given country but refrains from any definite conclusion and calls for further research on the topic (2003, 6).

A similar reservation is shown towards the inclusion of central bank independence on the federal-unitary dimension which also does not fit consistently with the remaining four indicators. In addition, it displays the lowest empirical correlation (11). Are these additions another consequence of Lijphart's inductive approach, and are they therefore only included because they fit the pattern – and fortuitously help Lijphart's advocacy of consensus democracy? Lijphart has replied that he originally

expected a separation of horizontal and vertical separation of powers, and that central banks should thus be also part of the horizontal executive-parties dimension (2003, 23). Vatter (2009, 142) even finds empirical evidence for the assertion in a restricted sample. The volatility of the results as well as the debate on the connection of corporatism and consensus democracy indicate that Lijphart's theoretical argument was made in hindsight after the beneficial effect for the consensus democracy had been ascertained.

Lijphart and his former student Markus Crepaz (1991) first suggested the theoretical and empirical connection between corporatism and consensus democracy. They described the two related but distinct meanings of corporatism: first, the organization of national interest groups into few but powerful peak organizations; second, the incorporation of those very interest groups into the governing process. Lijphart and Crepaz argue that corporatism belongs into the consensus framework because it contributes to inclusion of more actors that share responsibility for decision making. They conclude after a number of statistical tests that, "attempts to determine the causes and consequences of consensus democracy will [...] be more fruitful if our new [corporatism] measure is used" (246). Keman and Pennings (1995, 271) doubt the validity of the merger on theoretical as well as empirical grounds. They first acknowledge that corporatism has evolved in several countries but interject that it has done so through various historical pathways. The main theoretical criticism they confront Lijphart and Crepaz with is the fundamental difference of consensus democracy being a sum of parliamentarian practices to mediate conflicts<sup>21</sup> while corporatism is a de facto non-parliamentarian means through which policy outcomes are negotiated. In other words the former incorporates political actors while the latter is predominantly constituted by societal actors. While they admit that corporatism and consensus democracy "are based on the 'logic of accommodation'" the authors intuit that the two concepts still mean different things (1995, 274; cf. Roller 2005, 98ff.). Upon closer inspection of the corporatism index employed by Crepaz/Lijphart, Keman/Pennings find that it is highly correlated with consensus democracy while all individual corporatist measures it consists of show weaker correlations and Taagepera (2003) adds that Lijphart has decided in favor of simplicity for all indicators on the executive-parties dimension while the corporatism index is an expression of comprehensiveness at the dispense of simplicity. Keman/Pennings further note that the correlation between corporatism and consensus democracy is strengthened by the symmetry of outlier cases and some countries as Japan, Switzerland or Ireland are difficult to place into a corporatism scheme.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, Keman and Pennings (1995, 274) conclude that "corporatism and consensus democracy are not overlapping categories in reality in most of the countries under review." In a rebuttal Crepaz and Lijphart (1995) refute Keman and Pennings' criticism and declare that they wanted to create the most impartial measure of corporatism, thus invoking a host of different indices. They point out that the reported outlier cases actually weaken the relationship (284), and explain that corporatism and consensus democracy do go together due to their association in practice (287/8). Yet, their case is once more

21 As defined by the executive-parties dimension; the federal-unitary dimension is not subject to this criticism as well as distinct from corporatism in general.

22 The three countries receive strikingly different scores across the range of indices involved. Also refer to Croissant (2009) for the non-applicability of the interest group concept to Asian countries.

challenged by a sweeping criticism of the assessment of corporatism by Siaroff (1999) who wants to replace the elusive concept by a measure of integration. Lijphart (1999, 162) adopts Siaroff's index in subsequent work as it fits his assumptions even better.

The debate is explicitly concerned with the intricate decisions on indicators and their operationalization and only touches upon theoretical arguments in passing.<sup>23</sup> The flexibility that Lijphart shows towards his choice of an appropriate indicator once more underlines his inductive logic. Armingeon (2002, 82ff) demonstrates that corporatism is driving the results on macroeconomic performance but reinforces Lijphart's insight that majoritarian democracies are not necessarily better. Anderson (2001, 430-1), using older concept specifications by Lijphart, demonstrates that, after the removal of corporatism and central banks, consensus democracies actually fare worse than their majoritarian counterparts in terms of macroeconomic outcomes. Additionally, he confronts Lijphart with his own assertions: In *Patterns of Democracy* Lijphart (1999, 306) connects corporatism to the other elements of consensus democracy via political culture. If the support for Lijphart's findings is based on an underlying cultural variable it becomes impossible to transplant consensus democracy into other sovereign entities.

Roller avoids this implicit bias by clearly separating between institutionally formal and behavioral informal consensus and majoritarian democracies. When she recalculates the effects of the re-defined executive-parties/informal dimension she does find support for the superiority of informal consensus over majoritarian systems. Although these results are restricted to the social policy area, they are obtained with or without the inclusion of the corporatism index (2005, 233-7). Even in a multivariate analysis informal consensus democracies perform better in the areas of poverty reduction and municipal waste production (252). On the contrary the formal level shows a tie between majoritarian and consensus democracies, none can clearly leave the other behind in a specific set of policy areas. Especially, the superiority in the area of keeping inflation steady cannot be reproduced by Roller (2005, 248-9).

Further doubt is cast on the reliability of Lijphart's findings when considering his choice of control variables (Armingeon 2001, 91; Roller 2005, 127-8), rather lax statistical standards<sup>24</sup>, possible selection bias (Müller-Rommel 2008, 88)<sup>25</sup> and the haphazard choice of dependent variables which conflate policy outcomes and outputs. To improve on the last shortcoming Roller develops an elaborate framework of theoretical concepts and connected indicators of political *outcomes* or performance (70). Effectiveness of developed democracies is then tested in the areas of internal securities, wealth, socio-economic equality and security, as well as environmental protection (29). In sum, she concludes that "there are some, albeit not very strong, indications that informal negotiation democracies show policy traits that Lijphart calls 'kinder and gentler'" (264). This insight is supported by Anderson and Guillory (1997) who find that

23 For a detailed discussion of the theoretical connection between corporatism and *Konkordanzdemokratie* – a concept closely related to consensus democracy – refer to Lane and Ersson (1997). They conclude that the two concepts are conceptually distinct.

24 On the 5% level only half of Lijphart's findings remain significant (Roller 2005, 132).

25 In Lijphart's sample three out of four consensus democracies are economically highly developed but only one half of all majoritarian democracies show similar levels of development.



those voters who had supported the losing side in an election are more satisfied in consensus democracies, and Crepaz and Birchfield (2000, 206ff) who suggest that consensus democracies ease the pressures of globalization. Andeweg (2000, 122) calls these findings “hardly surprising” since they are characteristics of inclusiveness, one of the defining elements of consensus democracy.

The important lesson from the foregoing discussion is that Lijphart’s claim that consensus democracies do not fare worse than their majoritarian counterparts in macroeconomic performance largely depends on the connection to corporatism and central bank independence. His proposal that they are “kinder and gentler” seems to depend on informal or behavioral traits. The predictive power on Lijphart’s typology relating to macroeconomic and policy performance is subject to specification issues and might depend on an underlying cultural variable. If prediction is uncertain and might depend on cultural prerequisites, prescription becomes much more difficult.

The institutionalization of an independent central bank is easier than changing political culture, but it can be argued that central banks weaken democratic legitimacy because central bankers make crucial decisions for the well-being of citizens without the possibility of being held accountable for their decisions (McNamara 2002). The potential lack of accountability is another source of criticism that is directed at consensus democracies at large. Kaiser et al. (2002) find fault with Lijphart’s reliance on one input characteristic for characterizing democracy. They argue that the inclusion of as many preferences into government as possible is insufficient and insinuate the neglect of “responsibility” or accountability. For if as many preferences as possible are included in a governing coalition there is little possibility to change that particular government if it disregards the desire of the people: “Elections become a blunt weapon” (314). Ideal systems are real majoritarian systems<sup>26</sup> where inclusiveness and accountability are maximized (320). Andeweg (2000, 119) reminds Lijphart of his own earlier argument that the lack of accountability is especially problematic in homogeneous societies and suggests a link between the rise of right-wing parties in consensus democracies throughout the 1990s and frustration on side of the voter due to the lack of accountability (122-4). However, Lijphart (2000, 135) counters by attributing the rise of right-wing parties to lower entrance thresholds into the political arena which is desirable from a normative standpoint since it favors the inclusion of other viewpoints as well. Moreover, the goal of accountability is to keep the government close to the voters’ preferences. In consensus democracies governments are actually closer to the median voter than in their majoritarian counterpart despite the latter’s higher theoretical accountability (133-4; cf. Powell 2000).<sup>27</sup> While Lijphart’s empirical argument trumps the theoretical considerations, it needs to be noted that the debate on democratic quality focuses on the electoral system. Not only does it disregard the federal-unitary dimension, it also ignores the more informal arrangements of the executive-parties dimension.

26 Nagel’s (2000) understanding of majoritarian systems applies here.

27 The inconsistency between theoretical premise and empirical finding is due to the highly disproportional results in majoritarian systems that often helps to get governments elected that do not have a majority or even less actual votes than the opposition.

In sum, the democratic blessings of a country seem to mainly depend on its electoral system. Proportional representation is, however, only a one part of consensus democracy. The informal or behavioral arrangements implicit in the executive-parties dimension enhance the exhaustiveness of the typology but make it more difficult to engineer consensus democracy. Flinders (2010) has carefully analyzed how the attempts of New Labour to alter the UKs political system towards the consensual ideal have been hampered by “pre-existing fundamental principles” (285).<sup>28</sup> In other words, institutional changes, mainly on the federal-unitary dimension, have not led to more consensual politics. Thus, it seems not only difficult to implement consensus institutions in newly democratizing states<sup>29</sup> but it may be as hard to reform stable democracies. Given these challenges introduced by historical path dependencies and the questionable superiority of actual consensus institutions, the prescriptive value of consensus democracy is called into question.

## Conclusion

In this paper I have reviewed scholarly contributions that critically discuss Arend Lijphart’s insights on democratic systems. My guiding questions were how good Lijphart’s typology of consensus and majoritarian systems is compared to other typologies, how useful it is to explain patterns of democracy around the world and how well it actually predicts system performance. Concerning the first question, Lijphart’s typology has been a major breakthrough in categorizing established democracies by connecting institutional and more implicitly, actor-dependent characteristics. It has served as a basis for the refinement and further development of democratic types. While some competing approaches to categorize democracies exist (cf. Powell 2000; Tsebelis 2002), they are often not as exhaustive. Regarding the applicability to other world regions, Lijphart’s typology has been less successful, although it should be noted that most countries that were observed cannot be considered established democracies. The inductive approach that enabled Lijphart to define consociational and later consensus democracies has hampered the generalization of his ideal types to other world regions. Finally, my third question has revealed that the prescription of consensus institutions to all countries independent of their social structure is problematic because the predicted blessings of consensus democracies are based on unstable statistical results or can be attributed to underlying cultural factors. These cultural peculiarities that each country indubitably possesses cloud any prescribed institutional benefit. Neither can Lijphart shake off his own legacy of the cultural basis of consociational democracy, nor can individual countries deny their own cultural heritage and import institutional solutions without considerably reinterpreting them. Thus, any advice to constitutional engineers should be expressed with great caution. Lijphart’s repeated claim of the superiority of consensus over majoritarian democracies in the presence of evidence to the contrary should be continuously revisited, especially in novel environments.

Nevertheless, Lijphart’s contributions to democratic system theory remain invaluable and have informed and positively influenced other researchers (cf. Tsebelis 2002, 115). It is Lijphart’s legacy to have sparked the continuous investigation of patterns of democracy and their effects on system performance. In future research endeavors, political scientists in Lijphart’s

28 Also refer to Nagel’s comments on New Zealand (2000).

29 See above: Broadening the Empirical Scope

footsteps should try to disentangle the intricate relationship between culture and political institutions to gain a deeper understanding of how the two influence each other. Tests of institutional performance should be conducted on the effects of disaggregated formal rules that can be more easily implemented than entire blocks of institutions. Qualitative studies may provide insights into dynamic interactions between culture and institutions and help identify possible variables that could inform quantitative scholars. Important control variables like cultural heterogeneity and lagged measures of prior economic or policy performance should be included in analyses testing the institutional effects of consensus democracy. More importantly however, attempts should be made to endogenize consensus and majoritarian institutions. Cheibub (2007) found that presidential systems are much more likely to follow military rule and are also more prone to democratic breakdown than parliamentary systems due to the persisting military influence. Therefore, he concludes: “The language of institutional ‘choice’ must be used carefully, since this choice is usually constrained by historical circumstances” (25). To my knowledge no study has tried to systematically identify the structural or historical preconditions for consensus or majoritarian systems. Especially, scholars of diffusion mechanisms could test the influence of regional institutional paradigms. The application of spatial econometrics (Ward & Gleditsch 2008) ideally lends itself to such an endeavor. However, social structure and historical preconditions should not be forgotten: the ethnic make-up of a society, the degree of inequality and the level of economic development along with the colonial regime and conflict experiences probably all play important explanatory roles in the establishment of types of democracy. They may not finally determine the choice constitutional engineers make but being well-aware of them might well help to make better decisions.

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## Appendix

### A: Characteristics of consensus/majoritarian systems incl. operationalizations

Characteristic	Indicator	Consensus/Majoritarian
<b>Executive-Parties</b>		
Executive Power	Percentage of time minimal winning coalitions or single parties have stayed in power throughout the entire sample period – the higher that percentage is, the more concentrated power is in the executive	Dispersed/Concentrated
Executive-Legislative Relationship	Variable 1: amount of time a coalition sticks together Variable 2: every change of leadership or occurrence of election even though a coalition may stick Dominance of executive taken as the mean of both variables – the longer a coalition lasts the more dominant the executive	Balanced/Executive dominant
Party System	Laakson-Taagepera Index that counts the number of the most important parties in the lower chamber – the closer the index approximates “2” the more the party system resembles a bipartisan setup	Multiparty/Two-Party
Electoral System	Gallagher Index that computes the difference between received vote share and received seat share – the higher the difference the more disproportional the electoral system is considered to be	Proportional/Winner-Takes-All
Interest Groups	Siaroff Index which consists of eight different characteristics of corporatism and pluralism on a scale from one to five. The lower the score the higher the degree of corporatism in the given society.	Corporatism/Pluralism
<b>Federal-Unitary</b>		
Executive Division of Power	Ordinal scale created by Lijphart that assesses each countries performance on two dimensions – centralization and degree of federalism. All scores are summed up and the higher the score the more federal and central a given state is.	Federal/Unitary
Legislative Division of Power	Ordinal scale created by Lijphart on the strength and presence of bicameralism in a given country. The lower the index the more a country tends toward a unicameral system.	Bicameral/Unicameral
Constitution	Ordinal scale created by Lijphart on the size of the majority necessary for changing the constitution.	Rigid/Flexible
Judicial Review	Ordinal scale created by Lijphart that differentiates between no, weak, medium and strong judicial review.	Yes/No
Independent Central Banks	A composite index that assesses the independence of central banks on a scale from 0-1 where “1” means high independence	Yes/No

## B: Development of Consociational Theory

Year	Author & Title	Dimensions	Types	Features	Character
1956	Almond – <i>Comparative Political Systems</i>	Role-structure & Political Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anglo-American (homogeneous, secular political culture, highly differentiated role structure)</li> <li>Continental-European (fragmented political culture, role structure embedded in the subcultures)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anglo-American democracy is stable and superior to Continental-European Democracy which is probably immobile and likely for a “Caesaristic breakthrough”</li> </ul>	Empirical
1968	Lijphart – <i>Typologies of Democratic Systems</i>	Elite Behavior & Social Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centripetal<sup>30</sup> (homogeneous society &amp; adverse elites)</li> <li>Centrifugal (heterogeneous society &amp; adverse elites)</li> <li>Consociational (heterogeneous society &amp; coalescent elites)</li> <li>Depoliticized (homogeneous society &amp; coalescent elites)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consociational &amp; Centripetal Democracies are considered to maintain “peace and democracy”</li> <li>Centrifugal and Depoliticized democracies are inherently instable</li> </ul>	Empirical
1977	Lijphart – <i>Democracy in Plural Societies &amp; Majority Rule versus Democracies in Deeply Divided Societies</i>	Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consociational Democracy</li> <li>Majoritarian Democracy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>C.D. is declared fit for plural societies but has deficiencies in as that it is supposedly inefficient, immobile, strengthens cleavages, and shows democratic imperfections</li> </ul>	Normative
1984	Lijphart – <i>Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus-Government in Twenty-One Countries</i>	Executive-Party & Federal-Unitary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consensus</li> <li>Majoritarian</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consensus Democracy performs superior in several dimensions, Lijphart finds it to be the overall superior type.</li> </ul>	Empirical
1985	Lijphart – <i>Power Sharing in South Africa</i>	Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Power Sharing (Coalescing elites)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Grand Coalition, Mutual Veto, Proportionality, Group Autonomy</li> </ul>	Normative

<sup>30</sup> Centripetal Democracy is tantamount to Almond’s Anglo-American Democracy while Centrifugal Democracy is the counterpart of Continental-European Democracy.