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CONSOCIATIONAL DEMOCRACY

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■ **Abstract** Consociationalist theory served initially as an explanation of political stability in a few deeply divided European democracies. It argued that in these countries, the destabilizing effects of subcultural segmentation are neutralized at the elite level by embracing non-majoritarian mechanisms for conflict resolution. The theory was extended as new consociational democracies were discovered, as the related but broader concept of "consensus democracy" was introduced, and as a normative component was added, recommending consociational engineering as the most promising way to achieve stable democracy in strongly segmented societies. Consociationalism has always been controversial, but rather than one great debate about its validity, there have been many small debates about the countries, the concepts, the causes, and the consequences associated with consociationalism. These debates can become more fruitful if consociational theory is formulated less inductively and at a higher level of abstraction, and if the critics of consociationalism focus more on its principles and less on the operationalizations provided by its most important theorist, Arend Lijphart. The erosion of social cleavages in many consociational democracies raises the question of whether the very logic of consociationalism should lead to a prescription of more adversarial politics in those countries.

THE PUZZLE OF STABLE DEMOCRACY

The puzzle of stable democracy is this: Stability is fostered by the absence of conflict in society, and thus by social and cultural homogeneity; representative democracy, on the other hand, presupposes at least a modicum of disagreement and contestation. The same conflicting views that are the lifeblood of democracy are also threatening to its stability (Diamond 1993:24,29–32). The pluralist theory of cross pressures provides an answer to the simultaneous needs for homogeneity and heterogeneity. Social cleavages can be rendered harmless by cross-cutting each other, i.e. social groups that are homogeneous with respect to one social cleavage are heterogeneous with respect to another. Thus, in his trade union a church member interacts with secular working-class comrades, and in his church he encounters upper- and middle-class brethren. The individual is pulled in different directions; he or she is cross-pressured, experiencing cross-cutting loyalties,

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which supposedly have a moderating effect on political views, in turn reducing the intensity of political conflicts. The existence of both centrifugal forces (social cleavages) and centripetal forces (cross pressures) at the mass level solves the puzzle of stable democracy.

Not all democracies meet this requirement. Sometimes, the social cleavages coincide and reinforce each other, as when, in the example above, all religious citizens belong to the working class and all secular citizens belong to the upper or middle class. In such a segmented or deeply divided society, the social groups are likely to develop into antagonistic subcultures. One way to avoid the breakdown of democratic stability that could result is for one social group to be able to dominate the others (Lustick 1979). This is a democratic option only if the dominant group is in a majority, but because social cleavages are relatively long lasting, it would condemn the minority groups to permanent exclusion from power, which hardly seems viable as a long-term solution to the puzzle of stable democracy. Yet, there are countries where stable democracy and social segmentation do coexist. The contribution of consociationalism to democratic theory is to explain these deviant cases by showing that social heterogeneity need not be balanced at the same (mass) level; it can also be compensated for at the elite level, by cooperation rather than competition between political elites. Both social segmentation and elite cooperation are continua, but when we dichotomize these two dimensions for the sake of presentation, four ideal types result (Figure 1).

The first solution to the puzzle of stable democracy, in which social cleavages do not reinforce each other and in which, therefore, political elites can be allowed to compete, is called centripetal democracy (Figure 1, *lower left*). The United Kingdom and United States are examples. Centrifugal democracy (*lower right*) is the situation in which deep social divisions are not compensated for by elite cooperation, causing deadlock in the short term and breakdown of democratic government in the long term. Weimar Germany and the French Fourth Republic are the historical examples that are referred to most often. If the elites cooperate although the social cleavages are cross-cutting, we find ourselves in a depoliticized democracy (*upper left*), a situation discussed at the end of this review. Finally, in a consociational democracy (*upper right*), elite cooperation prevents deep social divisions from destabilizing democracy. That situation is the topic of this review.

The two-by-two table in Figure 1 is adapted from the article that launched the term consociational democracy (Lijphart 1968). As Lijphart himself readily acknowledges, he was not the first to use the term; it had been introduced a few years earlier as one of three types of authority patterns in Africa (Apter 1961:4–7,24–25,474–78), and it was probably first used in 1603 by the German political philosopher Althusius [unfortunately, with few exceptions, the term has been translated in the recent English edition (Althusius 1995)]. Nor was Lijphart the first to describe what, through his publications, became known as consociational democracy; just before his description, Lehmbruch analyzed this solution to the puzzle

		Mass Level	
		Cross-cutting Cleavages	Segmented
Elite Level	Cooperation	Depoliticized Democracy	*Consociational Democracy*
	Competition	Centripetal Democracy	Centrifugal Democracy

Figure 1 Lijphart's typology of democracies. (Adapted from Lijphart 1968:38.)

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of stable democracy in Switzerland and Austria as *Proporzdemokratie* (Lehmbruch 1967) or *Konkordanzdemokratie* (Lehmbruch 1968). Lijphart also mentions Lewis (1965) and Ake (1967), both working on West Africa, as predecessors (Lijphart 1985:97).

CONSOCIATIONAL EXPANSIONISM

Broadening the Theory?

"Consociational democracy means government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy" (Lijphart 1969:216). Most consociational scholars and their critics share this often-quoted core definition of consociational democracy, and it has remained unaffected by the evolution of the theory since the late 1960s.

All consociational analyses start with the destabilizing effect of social segmentation, whether because there are coinciding cleavages (e.g. Lijphart 1969:207–11), or because there is so little mobility between social segments that the usual democratic "game" of vote maximization cannot be played (e.g. Lehmbruch 1974:91), or because of what psychologists would call "ingroup-outgroup differentiation" (Nordlinger 1972:7, Steiner 1974:3).

An emphasis on the role of political elites is also characteristic of consociational analyses, although Huyse (1970:173–79) argues that political stability can be safeguarded as well if secondary cleavages cross-cut the social segments at the mass level. The central feature of consociationalism is that the elites eschew decision making by majority. Instead, they seek to accommodate political conflicts through compromise or amicable agreement. Finding a compromise can be facilitated by depoliticization, i.e. defining the issue as a technical (or economic or legal) problem rather than as an ideological conflict (e.g. Lijphart 1975a:129–30),

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or by (tacitly) agreeing to remove it from the political agenda altogether (e.g. Nordlinger 1972:26–27). Lehmbruch (1974:91–92) points out that in deeply divided societies, preferences are often incompatible and intransitive. Instead of a compromise in the sense of an intermediate solution, the negotiated agreement may therefore take the form of a package deal in which each social segment loses on some issues and wins on others. Another non-majoritarian mechanism for conflict resolution is to assign to the elite of each social segment its own sphere of influence, either territorially (federalism) or in the form of policy areas (functional decentralization). Nordlinger (1972:32), however, explicitly rejects such segmental autonomy as too strong an incentive for secessionist demands, and therefore threatening to the stability of the political system. In reply, Lijphart argues that it is not self-evident that separatism is encouraged more by federalism than by a unitary state. But even if Nordlinger's view is right, Lijphart argues, partition is an acceptable solution under certain conditions, e.g. when the social segments are geographically concentrated (Lijphart 1977:44–47). Some authors also mention mutual veto as a consociational device, implying that even non-decisions are preferable to decisions taken by majority (e.g. Lijphart 1977:36–38, Nordlinger 1972:24–26).

Non-majoritarian decision making is institutionally anchored by the inclusion of representatives from all social segments. Thus, consociational democracies are characterized by grand coalitions and by proportionality in the electoral system and in the distribution of public office and scarce resources. To Lehmbruch, widespread proportional patronage is such a distinguishing feature that it is reflected in his label for consociational democracy: *Proporzdemokratie* (Lehmbruch 1967:41–43).

Apart from differences in emphasis and differences of opinion on other aspects (e.g. the causes of consociationalism), these early formulations of consociational theory have in common the following idea: The threat to democratic stability by social segmentation is neutralized at the elite level by the use of various non-majoritarian mechanisms for conflict resolution, institutionally anchored by inclusive coalitions and proportionality in appointments. Later, Lijphart (e.g. 1977:25–47) singled out four characteristics (grand coalition, proportionality, mutual veto, and segmental autonomy) that must all be present if a political system is to qualify as a consociational democracy. Because Lijphart is also the scholar who has elaborated and defended consociational theory more than anyone else, and whom most critics of consociationalism have addressed, these four criteria have become the standard defining characteristics of consociational democracy. By insisting that all four should be present, and by ignoring other non-majoritarian mechanisms, Lijphart narrowed consociational theorizing unnecessarily.

On the other hand, Lijphart can also be said to have broadened the theory by introducing the concept of consensus democracy. Consensus democracy is characterized by institutional devices—first eight (Lijphart 1984a), now ten (Lijphart 1999)—that broaden the involvement in decision making as widely as possible. The opposite of consensus democracy, called majoritarian democracy, is

TABLE 1 The characteristics of majoritarian democracy, consensus democracy, and consociational democracy (adapted from Lijphart 1984a, 1989a:40, 1999)

Majoritarian democracy	Consensus democracy	Consociational democracy
1. Minimal winning cabinets	1. Oversized cabinets	1. Segmented society
2. Cabinet dominance over legislature	2. Separation of powers	2. Grand coalition
3. Two-party system	3. Multi-party system	3. Proportionality
4. Plurality system of elections	4. Proportional representation	4. Segmental autonomy
5. Pluralist interest group system	5. Corporatist interest group system	5. Mutual (minority) veto
6. Unicameralism	6. Bicameralism	
7. Unitary, centralized government	7. (Non-)territorial federalism and decentralization	
8. Flexible constitution	8. Entrenched constitution	
9. Parliamentary sovereignty	9. Judicial review	
10. Dependent central bank	10. Independent central bank	

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characterized by an identical number of features that concentrate power in the hands of the majority (Table 1). Data on each of these institutional variables were collected for 36 countries and subjected to a factor analysis that clustered the first five characteristics in one factor (the executives-party dimension) and the remaining five characteristics in a second factor (the federal-unitary dimension) (Lijphart 1999:2–5,243–57). Table 1 shows that consociational democracy and consensus democracy are closely related. Lijphart uses Belgium, Switzerland, and the European Union, three polities from the set of consociational cases, as examples of consensus government. Yet, there are important differences. Austria, one of the core consociational countries, is classified as rather majoritarian, whereas Italy, regularly mentioned as a centrifugal democracy, ends up among the most consensual democracies. Such different classifications result from theoretical differences. The standard four characteristics of consociationalism are largely behavioral and broadly defined; they may find expression in the rather specific institutional arrangements of consensus democracy, but they are not confined to these mechanisms. Proportionality is not restricted to the electoral system, for example. On the whole, however, consociational democracy is the more narrowly defined of the two concepts. Although not mentioned explicitly among the standard four characteristics, a segmented or deeply divided society is an indispensable element in the definition of consociational democracy, whereas it is not part of consensus democracy. True, consensus government is also suitable for divided societies, but "[t]he difference between them is that consociationalism is the stronger medicine:

while consensus government provides many incentives for broad power sharing, consociationalism requires it" (Lijphart 1989a:41). Consensus democracy has not replaced consociational democracy: the debate over consociationalism has continued without reference to consensus democracy (e.g. Halpern 1986, Lustick 1997) and Lijphart himself has continued to apply the concept of consociationalism separate from that of consensus government (compare, for example, Lijphart 1996 and 1999).

The Expanding Consociational Universe

What started as a few country studies of deviant cases in the light of existing democratic theory has gradually expanded. The first countries to be identified as consociational were the Netherlands from 1917 to 1967 (see e.g. Andeweg 1999; Daalder 1971; Lijphart 1975a, 1989b; Mair 1994; Pennings 1997), Austria from 1945 to 1966 (see e.g. Lehmbruch 1967, 1974; Luther 1999; Luther & Müller 1992; Powell 1970), Belgium since 1918 (see e.g. Deschouwer 1999, Huyse 1970, Lijphart 1981b, Seiler 1997), and Switzerland since 1943 (see e.g. Daalder 1971; Hottinger 1997; Lehmbruch 1968, 1993; Linder 1998; Sciarini & Hug 1999; Steiner 1974). Luxembourg has also been regarded as a consociational democracy, although very little has been published on this country (but see Govaert 1997).

Soon, cases from outside Western Europe were added, notably Lebanon from 1943 to 1975 and since 1989 (see e.g. Dekmeijan 1978, Lehmbruch 1974, Picard 1997), Malaysia from 1955 to 1969 and since 1971 (see e.g. Case 1996, Von Vorys 1975), and Colombia from 1958 to 1974 (see e.g. Dix 1980). The most recent, but highly contested, claim for consociationalism regards India (from independence to the late 1960s), long considered the exception that proves the consociational rule that elite competition in divided societies threatens democratic stability (Lijphart 1996, but see Lustick 1997:113–17). Other countries have only briefly experimented with consociationalism, such as Cyprus from 1960 to 1963 (Lijphart 1977:158–61) and Czechoslovakia from 1989 to 1993, or are classified as semi-consociational because not all the characteristics are in evidence, such as Canada and Israel (Lijphart 1977:119–34).

Consociational aspects have been discovered in at least as long a list of other countries (Lijphart 1985:84, 1996:258). If we broaden the field to include consensus democracy, the list would probably grow significantly, but so far only 36 countries have been analyzed, and 24 of them have been classified as largely consensual on at least one of the two dimensions (Lijphart 1999:248).

It has also been argued that the political system of the European Union should be included in the consociational universe (e.g. Steiner 1974:281–83, Taylor 1991). Consociational theory has imported some aspects of international decision making into domestic politics; consociational scholars such as Lehmbruch and Lijphart draw explicit analogies between international relations and consociational practice (Lehmbruch 1974:92; Lijphart 1975a:123,131). To describe the European

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Union as consociational thus provides a natural middle ground between international relations specialists, who characterize EU policy making as still primarily intergovernmental, and scholars in comparative politics, who proclaim it to be predominantly supranational. In the consociational interpretation of the European Union, the member states' societies constitute the separate social segments that make up EU society, and all four of Lijphart's consociational characteristics can be discerned: the European Council and the Councils of Ministers as grand coalitions; subsidiarity as segmental autonomy; the practice of decision making by consensus, even after the introduction of qualified majorities, as mutual veto; and proportionality (or even disproportionality at the expense of the bigger member states) in the composition of EU institutions. The position of the European Commission and the transnational party system that structures the elections to the European Parliament do not fit in this consociational interpretation. This has important consequences for the democratic nature (or future) of the European Union, according to consociationalist theory. People vote for parties in the EU elections, but the parties do not provide the elites representing the segments (nations) in the grand coalition. Addressing the democratic deficit by increasing the role of the European Parliament would destroy the European Union's consociational nature and would thereby threaten its stability, unless the cleavages that structure the EU party system replaced the boundaries between member states (see Chrysochoou 1994, Gabel 1998). If the European Union is a case of consociationalism at all, it cannot be regarded as a consociational democracy.

The set of consociational "sightings" may be growing, but some refer only to the past. Daalder noted back in 1974 that "[i]ronically, the consociational model is coming under considerable stress at the very moment at which it is belatedly recognized on the map of comparative politics" (1974:618). The dates mentioned above in connection with the core consociational countries (Lijphart 1996:259) indicate that consociationalism has largely disappeared in the Netherlands, Austria, India, and Colombia, and that it has failed at least temporarily in Cyprus, Lebanon, and Malaysia. In Czechoslovakia, the "velvet divorce" signaled the end of consociationalism and of the country. In Belgium, consociationalism has been transformed into federalism (Deschouwer 1999). It failed to take further root in the two semiconsociational countries (Canada and Israel). Only in Switzerland, regarded by many as a marginally (if at all) consociational democracy, do we see no evidence of change. For a model that is designed to explain political stability, such discontinuations and interruptions raise serious questions.

Lijphart argues that most of the discontinuations occur when consociationalism becomes the victim of its own success, and that most of the interruptions occur because relations between the social segments become embedded in an international conflict. The latter is most clearly the case in Lebanon, and to a lesser extent in Cyprus, although in both countries there were also flaws in the consociational design, such as fixed formulae for the representation of the segments that were actually disproportional (Lijphart 1977:147–61, 1985:91–93). The waning of Dutch and Austrian consociationalism should not be regarded as indications of failure

because in neither country did it result in the end of stable democracy. "The cooption of minority groups helped to render the corresponding cleavages less and less virulent. This raises the question of whether consociationalism is not bound to disappear by rendering itself superfluous" (Lehmbruch 1993:56–57). Although I do not disagree with that conclusion, it does imply that consociational democracy itself is not a stable regime. It is a transitional phase in the slow process of social integration (Linder 1998:171–73). If consociational democracy is not to disappear altogether, it needs a constant supply of deeply divided countries converting to consociationalism.

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From Explanation to Prescription

Such conversions are the objective of the next extension of consociationalism, from a purely empirical theory to one that is also strongly normative. Implementation of the standard four characteristics of consociationalism is recommended to deeply divided societies as the most promising way to achieve stable democracy (Lijphart 1977:223–38). Consociational engineering has been advocated for many countries, but the cases that have attracted most interest are Northern Ireland and post-apartheid South Africa. Northern Ireland is the case about which scholars have been most cautious with regard to consociationalism's chances of success (e.g. Barry 1975a, Lijphart 1975b, O'Leary 1989). Lijphart once suggested redrawing the boundary between Northern Ireland and the Republic, perhaps with some resettlement, as a possible solution (Lijphart 1975b:105–6) and argued that only the abhorrence of this alternative, along with continued British insistence on "power-sharing," might "still lead to a grudging acceptance of a consociational solution in the basically unfavorable environment of Northern Ireland" (Lijphart 1977:141). O'Leary reached a similar conclusion: "Immediate clarification of the choice between partition and power-sharing through the *threat* of partition just *might* produce a consociational settlement" (O'Leary 1989:603), but he was more hopeful than Lijphart that "coercive consociationalism" (i.e. a consociational solution imposed by Anglo-Irish cooperation, combined with institutional reform) could work. The 1998 Good Friday Agreement seems to indicate that events may indeed be moving in this direction. The agreement provides for power sharing (e.g. a dyarchy of Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister), minority veto power (i.e. complex rules requiring support for a proposal of both unionist and nationalist members of the Assembly), proportionality (in the electoral system and in appointments to the civil service, the police force, etc), and segmental autonomy (e.g. through equal funding of Protestant and Catholic schools) (O'Leary 1999).

In South Africa, consociational theory was misused (or at least grossly misrepresented) by the apartheid regime to defend its 1983 Constitution, but it also provided inspiration to apartheid's opponents, such as the Progressive Federal Party, and to the Buthelezi Commission of which Lijphart was a member. In 1977,

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Lijphart was still quite pessimistic: "In the extreme cases of plural societies, such as South Africa, the outlook for democracy of any kind is poor, but if there is to be democracy at all it will almost certainly be of the consociational type" (Lijphart 1977:236). But in 1985 he vigorously advocated consociational engineering in South Africa, arguing that "while on the whole background conditions for consociational democracy are not exceptionally favorable in South Africa, they are not unusually unfavorable either—contrary to what is often assumed" (Lijphart 1985:126–27). Many of his critics have doubted Lijphart's conclusion, arguing that "he is constructing a myth of a peaceful democratic future rather than advancing a neutral science of cause and effect" (Laitin 1987:265; see also e.g. Horowitz 1991:137–45) and that neither the National Party elites nor the African National Congress leadership would accept consociationalism. Yet, they did, at least for the period of transition. The interim constitution of 1993, for example, contained many of the characteristics of consociationalism: a government of national unity, a proportional electoral system, and—less clearly—some provisions for segmental autonomy in education as well as a weak form of minority veto (qualified majority requirements for constitutional change). On the other hand, there can be no doubt that the Constitution of 1996 marks an erosion of consociationalism (especially the disappearance of the grand coalition), although there is still room for disagreement about how much of it is left and what prognosis this entails for stable democracy in South Africa (Hanf 1997 versus Lijphart 1997:692–95).

Thus consociationalism has expanded from an amendment to democratic theory intended to help explain the existence of democratic stability in a few small European countries, to a normative theory of consociational engineering in practically all deeply divided countries.

CONSOCIATIONALISM CRITICIZED

From the start, consociationalism has been a controversial theory, but instead of one great debate about its validity there are numerous small debates about various aspects and applications. Without any claim to being exhaustive, I offer a brief survey of the main criticisms with regard to the countries, the concepts, the causes, and the consequences associated with consociationalism.

Countries

Many of the classifications of countries as consociational democracies have been contested, sometimes for theoretical reasons, sometimes for factual reasons. Lijphart's original interpretation of Dutch consociationalism, for example, has been challenged on the grounds that Dutch society was not as deeply divided as Lijphart presents it to be; the subcultures (the *zuilen* or pillars) in Dutch society were not as far apart, the religious and class cleavages were actually cross-cutting, and the risk to political stability was relatively minor (at least with the benefit of

hindsight). A grand coalition, including representatives from all segments, never existed at the level of the government (although most coalition governments were oversized), and Lijphart's identification of the tripartite Social Economic Council as a grand coalition overstates its importance. These are just a few of the objections to Lijphart's analysis of Dutch politics and society (for a more complete catalogue, see Van Schendelen 1984). Many of these criticisms are a matter of degree—more or less segmentation, more or less deference to the elites, etc. Together they present a much richer and more complex picture of Dutch political reality than the highly stylized and simplified version that Lijphart has painted, but they do not add up to a radically different image (Lijphart 1984b).

With regard to the Swiss case, however, the criticisms have found more acceptance. Critics have argued that Switzerland was never a deeply divided society, that religious and class cleavages cross-cut linguistic divisions, that linguistic groups had very few conflicting ambitions, and that partition into linguistically homogeneous and highly autonomous cantons and half-cantons took care of the few remaining conflicts. Others have gone further by suggesting that Swiss politics is not characterized by consociationalism—the Federal Council is not really a grand coalition because its members do not act as the leaders or representatives of the subcultures, and many decisions are taken by referendum, which is regarded as a majoritarian instrument (for a critique along these lines, see Barry 1975b).

Consociational scholars have been considerably more convincing in rebutting the suggestion that consociational practices are absent in Switzerland than in defusing the critique about the absence of deep social divisions. They have pointed out that elite cooperation does take place, albeit not exclusively in the Federal Council, and they have argued that the referendum acts as the functional equivalent of the minority veto, because elites will form inclusive coalitions to preempt the risk of one of the parties or groups calling for a referendum (e.g. Lehner 1984). Many scholars would share Daalder's conclusion about Switzerland (1974:618–19), that "politics in that country have traditionally been so flexible that one wonders whether it ever really fitted the consociational model: although it might have certain consociational practices at the elite level, it never had the tightness of segmented organizations which the model stipulates." But few have gone so far as to drop Switzerland from the list of consociational cases altogether, as Pappalardo (1981) has done, or to put it in a category of its own, as Hottinger (1997) proposes.

Concepts

Halpern complains that the debate on consociationalism is too focused on the countries, on the question of whether a particular political system can or cannot be properly classified as a consociational democracy. "The empirical inconsistencies within the consociational universe, and the debates engendered by them, are largely unresolvable since ... the disordered universe does not emanate from the cases but from the construction of the model" (Halpern 1986:182–83). She

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is not alone in criticizing the vagueness and elasticity of some of the core concepts used in consociational theory (e.g. Van Schendelen 1984, Lustick 1997). What, for example, is meant by a fragmented, a plural, a deeply divided, or a segmented society—and are these synonyms? "On the basis of which criterion can one say that some division is *not* a cleavage and that a cleavage is *not* segmental?" (Van Schendelen 1984:31). In response to such criticisms, Lijphart proposes four criteria of extreme pluralism: (*a*) the segments must be readily identifiable; (*b*) it must be possible to measure the size of each segment exactly; (*c*) the boundaries between the segments and between political, social, and economic organizations must coincide; and (*d*) the segmental parties must receive stable electoral support from the respective segments. Such an ideal-type segmented society may not exist, but the degree of pluralism can be measured by a society's deviation from these yardsticks (Lijphart 1981a:356). In earlier Dutch work he proposed five yardsticks to measure *verzuiling:* the role of ideology within the pillar, the size and density of the pillars' organizational networks, the cohesiveness of these networks through interlocking directorates and the like, the degree of "social apartheid," and the extent to which pillarized behavior is encouraged by the subcultural elite (Lijphart 1971). Such clarifications, however, highlight another problem. Some of the criteria to measure plurality and pillarization, such as the existence of subcultural organizations or the encouragement of social apartheid, indicate that cleavages are not pre-existing social realities that political elites find on their paths; they are social divisions that have been made salient by these political elites, and around which they have mobilized other people through political, social, and economic organizations. In other words, the political elites on whose prudence consociationalism relies to mitigate the destabilizing effects of segmentation are the same ones who created the problem in the first place. I return to this issue below.

The other central element of consociationalism, elite cooperation, is similarly contested. In 1969, Lijphart used the term elite cartel, defined not only by accommodative behavior but also by purposive leadership, characterized by commitment to maintenance of the system and by an understanding of the perils of fragmentation (Lijphart 1969:216, Lustick 1997:94–95). Later, this commitment and understanding are no longer mentioned, which may make the concept less precise but has the advantage that some possible causes of elite cooperation are removed from its definition. What remains is the essence of consociationalism: Political elites do not compete. However, when we try to assess whether elite behavior in a particular country complies with consociationalism's central prescription, we are likely to find that political elites exhibit behavior patterns that are mixed, with cooperation in some arenas on some issues some of the time, and adversarial behavior in other arenas (most notably the electoral one) on other issues at other times (see Halpern 1986:192–93). For that reason, Steiner (1981:348) has advocated that "decision modes about individual issues," not countries, should serve as the units of analysis. Lijphart (1981a:359) rightly counters that it would still be necessary to

aggregate from such individual issues in order to "establish links between typical decision-making patterns of national political systems, the degree of pluralism of their societies, their political stability, their problem-solving capabilities, and so on," but this leaves unresolved the thorny issue of how to measure the degree of elite cooperation.

A related criticism refers to the concept of grand coalition. It seems to indicate an all-party coalition, but it is much more loosely defined, including oversized coalitions, all-party commissions, catch-all parties such as India's Congress Party (Lijphart 1996), and "diachronic coalitions" in which power rotates, as in Colombia between 1958 and 1974 (Lijphart 1977:31–36). Thus, according to Halpern (1986:190), "grand coalition becomes a catch-all concept, describing any joint governmental or quasi-governmental activity pursued by segmental élites whether they undertake that activity as bloc representatives or not, or engage at all in 'summit diplomacy.'" This may be valid literary criticism of some of Lijphart's writings, but it does not do much theoretical damage; consociationalism is characterized by intersegmental elite cooperation, and whatever institution, mechanism, or venue can be shown to have facilitated such cooperation fits the theory. The same response applies to similar criticisms of other characteristics of consociationalism: Functional equivalents to minority veto, proportionality, and segmental autonomy do not invalidate consociationalism simply because Lijphart fails to mention them.

The potentially most damaging criticism of consociationalism is that it is not a theory but a mere tautology. "'Consociational democracy' as conceptualized by Lijphart puts together in a package stability, dissensus, segmentation, elite accommodation and some mix of the 'consociational devices'" (Barry 1975b:480). Consociational democracy is defined by a deeply divided society and by elite cooperation; in other words, both the problem and its solution are part of the definition. Although it is true that Lijphart's writings sometimes explicitly suggest that democratic stability also defines consociational democracy, the more important criticism is that even without explicit incorporation into the definition, consociationalism practically implies stability. To say that elite cooperation leads to political stability is almost the same as saying that there will be no fights in the playground when the children stop quarreling (almost, because there still remains the possibility that the masses will revolt spontaneously against their cooperating leaders). In that sense, consociational democracy is not a theory of cause and effect but rather a descriptive category defined by a problem, the reaction to the problem by political elites, and the consequence of that reaction. However, this is not inevitable. Although there may not be much room for theorizing about the relationship between elite cooperation and stability, there is still much to be said about the relationship between social segmentation and elite cooperation. All that is needed is to remove the existence of deep social divisions from the definition of consociationalism, as Lijphart himself has done in his related work on consensus democracies. If consociationalism is defined as elite cooperation only (using the four standard characteristics or functional equivalents), there remains only the

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complaint that the theory "does *not* answer the vitally important question why and how such consociational systems developed" (Daalder 1974:609).

Causes

A Self-Denying Prophecy? Twenty-five years after Daalder posed the question of causation, it has increased in importance because of consociationalism's expansion to prescription, but it has still not been answered satisfactorily. Lijphart's own answer stresses elite prudence. "[T]he essential characteristic of consociational democracy is not so much any particular institutional arrangement as the deliberate joint effort by the elites to stabilize the system" (Lijphart 1969:213). In his interpretation of Dutch consociationalism, he argues that, in the first decades of the twentieth century, the Netherlands was moving toward the category of centrifugal democracy, characterized by social segmentation and elite competition. The outlook was therefore one of immobilism and instability, but this prognosis turned into a self-denying prophecy when the elites realized these risks and set out to counteract the centrifugal tendencies by deliberate cooperation (Lijphart 1975a:182–84). If we assume that Dutch (or Belgian or Austrian) leaders are not inherently more farsighted or virtuous than their counterparts in Northern Ireland or the former Yugoslavia, the notion of a self-denying prophecy merely gives us a description of what happens, not why it happens. One possibility is that the danger of the country falling apart is so obvious that anybody with common sense would realize that the time has come to bury the hatchet (but then why would the masses not reach that same conclusion?). Another possibility is that favorable conditions facilitate the elites' decision to cooperate. Lijphart discusses this possibility in his comparative work, although he continues to insist, "The really crucial factor is the commitment and skill of the political leaders" (1985:127). The large variation in the lists of favorable conditions before 1985 (see Table 2) is probably explained partly by the "discovery" of new empirical cases, partly by the discussion of these factors by other scholars (notably Daalder 1974, Nordlinger 1972, Pappalardo 1981, Steiner 1974). It is not helpful, however, that Lijphart presents a new list of favorable conditions in 1985, while in the same publication reaffirming his full support for the conditions he had specified in 1977 (Lijphart 1985:115 fn).

Cross-Cutting Cleavages? The status of some of Lijphart's favorable conditions is not clear. He argues that a multiparty system would contribute to consociationalism with reference to the desirability of each segment being represented by a party and the undesirability of one segment being in a majority, factors that overlap with other favorable conditions mentioned in Table 2. Lijphart does not reach a clear conclusion as to whether the degree of pluralism and cross-cutting cleavages have any bearing on the development of consociationalism. The mention of cross-cutting cleavages as a favorable condition for consociationalism (also by Steiner 1974:265–68) has resulted in considerable confusion because it seems to contradict the essence of consociationalism, namely to provide an avenue toward

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TABLE 2 Lijphart's favorable conditions for the development of consociational democracy in divided societies (from Lijphart 1969, 1977, 1985, 1996)

Lijphart 1969:216–22	**Lijphart 1977:53–103**	**Lijphart 1985:119–28, 1996:262–63**
1. Multiple balance of power	1. Multiple balance of power	1. No majority segment
2. External threat	2. Multiparty system	2. Segments of equal size
3. Relatively low decision-making load	3. Small country	3. Small number of segments
4. Distinct lines of cleavage	4. Degree of pluralism (?)	4. External threat
5. Length of time a consociational system has been in operation	5. Cross-cutting cleavages (?)	5. Small population
6. Internal political cohesion of subcultures	6. Segmental isolation and federalism	6. Socioeconomic equality
7. Adequate articulation of the interests of the subcultures	7. Tradition of elite accommodation	7. Geographical concentration of segments
8. Widespread approval of the principle of government by elite cartel	8. Representative party system	8. Tradition of elite accommodation
	9. Overarching loyalties	9. Overarching loyalties

*Question marks indicate factors that Lijphart mentioned without definitely concluding that they are favorable conditions.

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democratic stability when cleavages do not cross-cut. It is important to distinguish the level at which the cross-cutting cleavages operate. Some critics of Lijphart's interpretation of the Dutch case have argued that the country was not deeply divided because the class cleavage and the religious cleavage did cross-cut. This cannot be denied, but the associated moderating cross pressures were absent at the mass level, because religious workers were not members of "the" trade union, but of religious trade unions, etc. The cross pressures operated at the level of the leadership of the religious subcultures, who had to keep both their working-class and their middle-class rank and file on board. One might argue that this rather exceptional circumstance was most favorable to consociationalism because it kept elite attitudes moderate while keeping the subcultures isolated.

Since 1985, cross-cutting cleavages have been replaced by socioeconomic equality (in 1996, Lijphart mentioned the latter as the second most favorable condition), meaning that it is helpful when the class cleavage cuts across whatever other cleavage is salient. Great socioeconomic disparity between, say, linguistic or ethnic groups leads to demands for redistribution, which constitute the kind of zero-sum game that is a severe challenge to elite cooperation. Nevertheless, this new condition does imply that segmentation based on social class lends itself less easily to consociationalism. There is an added reason why this might be so: One

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of consociationalism's characteristics, segmental autonomy, seems less applicable to class-based segments. "For example, segmental autonomy does not afford a socialist subculture the power to own the means of production or set wage policies" (Halpern 1986:192).

Small Countries' Prerogative? The small size of the country or the population is also contested as a favorable condition for consociationalism. Lijphart defends this condition on the grounds that "[i]n small countries political leaders are more likely to know each other personally than in larger countries, the decision-making process is less complex, and such countries generally do not conduct a very active foreign policy" (Lijphart 1985:123). These arguments have been convincingly criticized. Personal contact between leaders depends more on psychological than on geographical distance; the social segmentation that characterizes consociational democracies already multiplies the number of organized groups and makes decision making complex, so that the contribution of size in this respect can only be marginal; and the condition of a low foreign policy decision load contradicts another condition, that of external threat (Pappalardo 1981:375–79, but see Lijphart 1985:115–16).

A Tradition of Elite Accommodation? Of particular theoretical relevance are the debates about the tradition of elite accommodation and multiple balance of power. Introducing a consociational tradition as a favorable condition only transforms the question about the origins of consociationalism into a question about the origins of the tradition of consociationalism, but even if the latter question can be answered, puzzles remain. In his debate with Lijphart about Dutch consociationalism, Daalder (e.g. 1989) argues that a tradition of elite accommodation actually predates the development of class and religious cleavages in Dutch society and that consociationalism therefore does not result from any self-denying prophecy. He draws attention to the striking similarities between the characteristics of consociationalism and the way politics was conducted in the much earlier days of the Dutch confederal Republic of the Seven United Provinces. The pillars replaced the provinces, but the emphasis on elite bargaining and compromise and on the autonomy of the constituent parts can be found both before 1795 and after 1917. The weakness in Daalder's explanation is the miraculous and timely reemergence of an elite culture that belonged to a political system of days long past. Even if socialization and selective recruitment allowed this culture to survive among the ruling establishment (see Lehmbruch 1967:26-29), it is not self-evident why the leaders of the new emancipatory movements of Protestants, Catholics, and the secular working class that came to form the pillarized segments would adopt the ways of those they were trying to replace. Lehmbruch's conclusion regarding Austria [accommodationist practices during the days of Empire (1967, 1974)] is similar to Daalder's on the Netherlands and can be criticized on similar grounds (Pappalardo 1981:386). The continuation of a tradition of elite accommodation deserves explanation as much as its origins.

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Absence of a (Near) Majority? The existence of a multiple balance of power among the social segments as a favorable condition for consociationalism implies several variables that Lijphart mentions separately in later work: the absence of a majority for any of the subcultures; the subcultures being of roughly equal size; and the number of segments being relatively small, between three and five. The most plausible of all the favorable conditions is the absence of a majority. Minority status for all groups means that militant intransigence not only threatens political stability (a leader may not recognize the danger or may not care) but also reduces a segmental leader's influence to that of a voice in the wilderness, whereas by sharing power at least something can be gained. From the opposite point of view, if political elites could count on a solid majority, why would they share power with and make concessions to the losing minority? It is not in their self-interest, democratic norms do not require it, and their followers may not accept it. The optimal situation seems to be one in which no party comes close to 50%, so that segmental leaders cannot entertain any hope that they might achieve a majority by competing a bit more vigorously.

The absence of this favorable condition might go a long way in explaining why consociationalism proves so difficult to achieve in Northern Ireland and why it broke down so quickly in Cyprus. However, in Austria, consociationalism succeeded even though there were only two *Lager* and it came into being at a time when one of the subcultural parties, the People's Party, had an overall majority in Parliament. Moreover, "[I]f the post-1945 Austrian consociation is compared with the deeply conflict-ridden experience of the First Republic, one immediately notices that whereas in the former there is two-partyism, in the latter there was multi-partyism, with two small German Nationalist parties actively involved in the coalition game between the wars" (Pappalardo 1981:368). In another core consociational democracy, Belgium, the Christian Democrats gained overall majorities in several elections, and were sufficiently close at other times to be tempted to switch to a more adversarial style. In Belgium, there are signs that consociationalism did indeed come under considerable stress at such moments, but not in Austria, at least before 1966. Pappalardo finds the Austrian exception sufficient grounds to dismiss the absence of a majority or near majority as a favorable condition. However, the Austrian case can improve our understanding. At a higher level of abstraction, the absence of a (near) majority is one example of a situation in which the costs of competition outweigh its benefits, while the benefits of cooperation outweigh its costs. There are other variations of the same calculation, as when stability has actually broken down and political violence is inflicting heavy casualties among members of the majority group. Just as legitimate hope of a majority is an unfavorable condition for consociationalism, well-founded fear of casualties is a favorable condition. If power sharing ever takes root in Northern Ireland, it may well be chiefly for this reason. In the admittedly more complex situation of South Africa during apartheid, "[t]he capability and desire of black groups to employ violence strategically, and in so doing threaten their own economic stake in the country, [was] a necessary condition for bringing the National Party into

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serious negotiations" (Laitin 1987:265). Laitin noted that, theoretically, "it is odd that such an important condition for the making of a consociational bargain is not discussed formally as a 'favorable' condition" (1987:265). In Austria, violence had not erupted when elite cooperation started, but the First Republic, which had ended in a civil war, was still a fresh memory. Similarly, in Belgium, a conflict over the monarchy led to violence in 1950. Such experiences may have led even majority leaders in these countries to calculate that the costs of competition were too high. Electoral chances and risk of casualties need not be the only types of benefits and costs: minority support may be indispensable to ward off a common enemy, or the minority may inflict economic damage on the majority or credibly threaten to do so (Nordlinger 1972:42–53).

The other components of "multiple balance of power"—segments of equal size and small number of segments—are less convincing as favorable conditions for consociationalism. Lijphart offers few arguments in support. He claims that equal size of segments facilitates negotiations, but it is not clear why this would be so, especially if the nonelectoral costs just mentioned are taken into account. Moreover, the rule of proportionality seems designed to facilitate elite cooperation between segments of unequal size. Lijphart points out that a small number of segments keeps transaction costs low and thus prevents negotiations from becoming complicated. This cannot be disputed, but such complications may also facilitate elite cooperation by obfuscating winners and losers in any package deal. For this reason Steiner (1974:268) asserts that the higher the number of subcultures, the more probable it is that amicable agreement is the typical mode of decision making. Theoretically at least, it is not self-evident what the optimum number of segments would be.

Lijphart's lists in Table 2 do not exhaust the number of favorable conditions for consociationalism mentioned in the literature. Pappalardo (1981:369–75), for example, argues that stability among subcultures rather than an equilibrium between them is a favorable condition. Such stability would reduce the uncertainty in the calculations of the costs and benefits of competition and cooperation referred to above. Furthermore, there is considerable evidence that subcultural stability is indeed associated with the existence of consociationalism, just as a subsequent decline of subcultural stability is associated with an erosion of consociationalism. However, this association seems to be of a different, almost tautological, nature. The existence of stable subcultures is the problem for which consociationalism provides a solution, rather than a favorable condition for its emergence. Subcultural stability is implied in concepts such as social cleavage, segmentation, or a deeply divided society. Consociationalism simply does not address the problem of conflict regulation in a society with groups of shifting membership that are divided by temporary differences of opinion.

The Nature of the Cleavages? For most consociational scholars, the nature of the social cleavages is not among the favorable or unfavorable conditions for consociationalism.

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Daalder's 1974 complaint is still valid: "Somewhat surprising (in view of the overwhelming and almost determinative importance ascribed to the existence of divisive cleavages), there is in this literature little systematic reflection on whether particular cleavages are more likely to lead to conflict or accommodation than others" (Daalder 1974:613). Some of the problems with divisions based on social class (by definition entailing socioeconomic inequality and limited scope for segmental autonomy) are mentioned above. In view of consociationalism's ambitions as a normative theory, however, the biggest question about its applicability is whether ethnic cleavages should be considered a favorable or an unfavorable condition.

The debate on this issue is muddled because the concept of ethnicity in this context is defined, implicitly or explicitly, in a variety of ways (e.g. Rabushka & Shepsle 1972, Horowitz 1985, McGarry & O'Leary 1993). For the sake of argument, let us use a most restrictive definition of ethnicity, including only race or phenotype, and contrast this with social segmentation based on ideology, with religious and linguistic cleavages at various points in between. Ethnic cleavages, it is argued, constitute an unfavorable condition for the emergence of consociationalism. First, ethnic conflicts are assumed to escalate more easily because there tends to be little effort involved in establishing someone's race, which facilitates ingroup-outgroup differentiation. "[I]t simply does seem to be the case that acts of gross inhumanity are more readily engaged in or supported when the victims are members of an ethnically-defined out-group than when the basis of differentiation is class or religion, especially when sympathetic identification is reduced by large physical or cultural differences" (Barry 1975b:502). Barry offers no empirical evidence for this broad generalization, and his comparison with the supposedly less violent nature of religious conflicts in particular is not self-evident. But even if further research supported Barry's contention, this greater risk of bloodshed is one of the types of costs that can bring calculating leaders to accept a consociational solution.

There seems to be more mileage in a second aspect of ethnic conflict mentioned by Barry as an obstacle to consociationalism. "[W]here the basis of the division is ethnic the question may not be how the country is to be run but whether it should be a country at all" (Barry 1975b:503). In an era when polities are defined as nation-states, this seems a plausible hypothesis. This is also why Nordlinger (1972:37–39) warns against attempts to overcome segmental conflicts by forging a national identity; such efforts are likely to make segmental symbols and traditions more rather than less salient. Lijphart counters Barry's argument by pointing out that the problem will hardly arise unless the segments are geographically concentrated (Lijphart 1985:96). However, even if few areas are ethnically "pure," geographical concentration seems more likely for ethnic groups than for ideological groups. Moreover, Lijphart's defense is at odds with his own listing of geographical concentration among the conditions that are favorable to consociationalism (see Table 2). Contrary to Barry, Di Palma (1977:224–25) argues that the ascriptive nature of ethnicity renders interethnic competition for mass support

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pointless and limits the ideological spread and polarization that characterize ideological divisions. This may be an underestimation of the potential of ethnicity for radicalization and extremism. However, the more important problem is that Di Palma's supposedly easier accommodation of ethnic conflict remains moot as long as Barry's question of national identification remains unresolved.

In addition, it has been suggested that ethnic leaders are less in control of their rank-and-file membership than are leaders of ideologically defined groups. First, leaders mobilize and control groups through organizations, but organizations are not needed to define membership of an ethnic group. "Whether these groups have an organizational embodiment is a contingent matter but in any case they do not need an organization to work up a riot or a pogrom so long as they have some way of recognizing who belongs to which group" (Barry 1975b:502). This hypothesis seems plausible, but no empirical evidence is offered. Second, whereas leaders may be needed to interpret Marx or the Bible, they are not needed to define what is in the collective interest of the ethnic group (Barry 1975b:502–3). As a consequence, leaders of ethnic groups are allowed less maneuvering room than leaders of ideological groups, and they are more vulnerable to competition from within the subculture. "The very act of forming a multiethnic coalition generates intraethnic competition" (Horowitz 1985:575).

These hypotheses lack more than empirical evidence. It is not clear why members of ethnic groups would be more astute than members of ideological groups or why ethnic leaders would run a greater risk of being outflanked when they seek accommodation than leaders of ideological groups. We should not assume that ethnic conflicts are inherently more dangerous simply because they refer to "primordial" or "pre-industrial" allegiances.

Two conclusions emerge from the debate on the prospects for consociationalism in ethnically divided societies. First, even though not all arguments for regarding ethnic cleavages as an unfavorable condition are convincing, it is hard to dismiss the suggestions that the question of national unity arises more easily when society is divided along ethnic lines, and that ethnic leaders are more vulnerable because organizations are a less effective means to control ethnic groups. Because ethnicity is a prominent cleavage in most deeply divided countries, addressing these doubts should be a priority for consociational theory if it is to remain of prescriptive value. Second, in concentrating on factors that facilitate intersegmental elite cooperation, the discussion of favorable conditions has somewhat neglected factors that facilitate intrasegmental elite control, regardless of whether the segments are ethnically defined.

Elite Security "Elite predominance over a politically deferential and organizationally encapsulated following" is one of only two conditions that Pappalardo (1981:380–82) regards as unambiguously favorable to consociationalism. Mass political apathy features in several consociational analyses (e.g. Huyse 1970, Lijphart 1975a). The assumption behind this favorable condition is that segmental leaders may decide to cooperate with each other but that their followers never

want them to switch from competition to cooperation. This is not necessarily so, not even in deeply divided countries, as the support in referendums for the 1998 Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic illustrates. But in general, it does seem more likely that followers will greet consociationalism less than enthusiastically. Social differences do not become divisive cleavages spontaneously; they are made salient by political entrepreneurs who use them to mobilize support. The more persuasive the politicians have been in this regard, the more difficult it will be for them to carry their followers with them when they start cooperating with "the other side."

Tsebelis (1990:160) models this problem as one of nested games, with subcultural leaders playing in the intersegmental (in his example, parliamentary) arena and simultaneously in the intrasegmental (in his example, electoral) arena. Cooperating in the intersegmental arena will hurt leaders in the intrasegmental arena unless the followers do not know what the leaders are up to, or unless there is no intrasegmental competition that provides the followers with an alternative. In Tsebelis' words (1990:171), "if elites enjoy a monopoly of representation within the pillar *or* if information costs regarding elite behavior are high ... then elites are less constrained by the electoral arena and play a chicken game. If there is elite competition within the pillar *and* information costs are low ... then elites have to conform to the demands of the masses, and a prisoners' dilemma or a deadlock game results." We have to turn principal-agent theory on its head and look for factors that maximize the risk of agency loss, to find the intrasegmental conditions that are favorable to the emergence of consociationalism.

Nordlinger (1972:78–87) lists four such conditions: "apolitical quiescence" among followers, "politically acquiescent" followers, "patron-client relations" between leaders and followers, and "mass parties with extensive organizational capabilities." The latter two institutional variables may even reinforce each other, as in Austria and Belgium, where dense subcultural networks of organizations have developed into political machines offering a whole range of services to individual members. Nordlinger places the political parties in the center of these organizational networks, but a recent comparative study reports considerable variation in the position and role of the parties within the segments (Luther & Deschouwer 1999). The importance of organizations as instruments to insulate and control the subcultures has long been noted in the literature. It explains why social segmentation often increases rather than decreases after the emergence of consociationalism. This increase in segmentation is not necessarily a sign of reverse causality between segmentation and consociationalism, as Daalder (1989:34) implies when he notes that, in the Netherlands, the problem (pillarization) became aggravated after the solution (elite accommodation). Nor is the increase in segmentation the result of elite efforts to prevent intersegmental hostility ("good fences make good neighbors") as Lijphart suggests (1985:106–7). Instead, increased segmentation after the beginning of consociationalism is probably motivated by the elites' desire to reduce their own increased intrasegmental vulnerability that is caused by their intersegmental cooperation.

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The electoral system that is found most often in consociational democracies, Proportional Representation with party lists, on the one hand protects party leaders from within-party rivals (through their control over the ordering of the party lists), but on the other hand renders them vulnerable to new parties vying for their subculture's support. By tying itself to the subculture's organizations for many other social activities, the party reduces the attractiveness of its competition. Still, very little is known about patterns of elite recruitment and competition within social segments or about patterns of intrasegmental information and communication as they occur in deeply divided societies with and without consociationalism.

A final bone of contention with regard to conditions that are favorable to the emergence of consociational democracy is their importance (e.g. Bogaards 1998:486–93). Lijphart (1977:54) downplays it by warning that "[e]lite behavior seems to be more elusive and less susceptible to empirical generalization than mass phenomena" and that the favorable conditions "are helpful but neither indispensable nor sufficient in and of themselves to account for the success of consociational democracy." This hedging exasperates some of his critics, who argue that it renders the hypotheses untestable and allows Lijphart to recommend consociationalism whether the conditions are favorable or not (e.g. Lustick 1997:107, Pappalardo 1981:366, Van Schendelen 1984:34). In response, Lijphart points out that his propositions about favorable conditions are probabilistic in nature, as is "virtually all social science knowledge" (1985:115). This is fair enough, but the only way to test such probabilistic propositions is to study the correlation between supposedly favorable conditions and consociationalism in a fairly large sample of segmented societies, including both consociational successes and failures. Until such evidence is available, the cogency of the reasoning behind many of the favorable conditions could be improved by less post hoc and more systematic deductive theorizing.

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Consequences

Consociationalism's intended consequence is stability, but if the leaders of the various segments cooperate, and if their followers allow them to cooperate, this is virtually a foregone conclusion. Meanwhile, there may be other, perhaps unintended, consequences. Lijphart himself warns that consociationalism may lead to indecisiveness and inefficiency. Elite bargaining within grand coalitions will slow down decision making; applying proportionality to the composition of the civil service interferes with merit appointments; segmental autonomy leads to a multiplication of agencies and facilities; and the mutual veto may produce deadlock, which Lijphart regards as the gravest problem of consociationalism (1977:50–51). When assessing the significance of these potential disadvantages, Lijphart continues, we should distinguish between short-term and long-term effectiveness. In the short term consociationalism may be less effective for the reasons mentioned, but in the long term it will be more effective than adversarial politics because of the stability and legitimacy consociationalism engenders in deeply divided societies (Lijphart 1977:51–52).

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In addition to time span, the nature of the agenda is likely to make a difference. If issues of distribution dominate the agenda, consociationalist characteristics such as proportionality augur well for efficient decision making. If, on the other hand, the agenda consists largely of emotionally charged yes/no, black/white issues, the risk of immobilism is greatest because the very nature of consociationalism is the avoidance of zero-sum decisions. Little is known about the extent to which these potential disadvantages materialize in consociational democracies, but on the basis of Lijphart's related work on consensus democracies, the risks should not be overestimated. In a comparison of the performance of both consensus democracies (based on the executives-parties dimension) and majoritarian democracies with regard to economic growth, inflation, unemployment, the budget deficit, economic freedoms, strike activity, and the control of political violence, most correlations turned out to be statistically insignificant, disproving the suggestion that consensus democracies would be less effective in these respects (Lijphart 1999:258–74).

Several authors express concern about the consequences of consociationalism for the quality of democracy (e.g. Lustick 1997:104-5, Van Schendelen 1984:39–40). Absence of opposition, a predominance of elites, and mass political apathy do not suggest democratic vitality. Initially, Lijphart (1977:48) struck a rather defensive note when discussing these misgivings: "Under the unfavorable circumstances of segmental cleavages, consociational democracy, though far from the abstract ideal, is the best kind of democracy that can realistically be expected." In later work, Lijphart changed his mind: "There is nothing in consociationalism that true democrats have to be ashamed of" (1985:109). He bases his assertion on Dahl's ranking of countries according to their degree of democracy (defined as polyarchy). The countries that are commonly regarded as consociational all figure in the highest categories (Dahl 1971:231–48, cited by Lijphart 1985:110). Lijphart's adoption of polyarchy as his definition of democracy amazes Van Schendelen. "In a polyarchy competition between the elites is, more than anything else, essential; in a consociation basically the opposite, namely intense collaboration, is crucial" (Van Schendelen 1984:32). However, the puzzle is easily solved. Dahl (1971) defines polyarchy by two dimensions, competition and inclusiveness. He discusses institutionally guaranteed competition between the elites (1971:1–10), but he emphasizes electoral competition (the right to be eligible for office, the right to compete for votes, free and fair elections, etc), and the electoral arena has, with but few exceptions, been exempted from consociationalism's requirement that the elites cooperate (although this competition is intended to mobilize the faithful rather than to win over new converts). With a single exception, namely Dahl's requirement that institutions are responsive to votes and other expressions of preference, consociational democracies need not be inferior to adversarial democracies in this respect. Moreover, polyarchy's second dimension is inclusiveness, the proportion of the population entitled to participate in public contestation. Here, consociationalism may even outperform adversarial democracies, since its very aim is to prevent the permanent exclusion from power of any social segment. In his related work on consensus democracies, Lijphart even stakes out a claim that

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consensus democracy is of a higher quality and is a "kinder, gentler" democracy than majoritarian democracy. Again, most of the indicators used pertain to inclusiveness: women's representation, political equality, voter turnout, percentage of the vote on which the governing majority is based, etc (Lijphart 1999:275–300).

This is not to deny consociationalism's democratic credentials but to argue that there are different perspectives on democracy, and that consociationalism agrees more with one than with the other. If democracy is perceived as a device to keep political elites responsive and accountable to the masses, competition (and not just in the electoral arena) is essential, but if democracy is perceived as the avoidance of tyranny (including Madison's tyranny of the many over the few), inclusiveness is vital. Neither perspective is inherently more democratic than the other (cf. Huber & Powell 1994), but one may be preferable to the other in a given situation. Where the most salient distinction lies not within the masses, but between elites and masses, the need for competition may call for majoritarian or adversarial democracy; where the most salient distinction is between social segments of a relatively ascriptive nature within the masses, the need for inclusiveness may require a consociational or consensus democracy.

MIDTERM ASSESSMENT OR OBITUARY?

The problem of stable democracy in deeply divided societies is as relevant today as it was when consociational theory was first formulated three decades ago. Given the number and varied nature of the debates on consociationalism, it is difficult to arrive at an overall assessment. Lijphart's most comprehensive response to consociationalism's critics (1985:83–117) is both hailed as "very persuasive" (Mair 1994:122) and dismissed as evasive (Lustick 1997:109). The debates have two problems. First, because of Lijphart's prominent role in the consociational literature, many critics take aim at his elaboration of consociationalism, or at changes in his formulations over time. Some of their points are fair (such as the unnecessarily circular wording of consociational theory), but with all due respect for Lijphart's highly influential contributions, a valid criticism of some aspect of his work is not always a censure of the basic ideas of consociationalism. Second, the level of abstraction of many contributions to (and critiques of) consociationalism is rather low, perhaps because the theory has largely been developed inductively from empirical case studies. Lijphart (1985:88) rightly argues that "the crucial question is not whether propositions that specify relationships among variables are arrived at inductively or deductively, but whether they are empirically valid or not." However, an elaboration of these propositions at a higher level of abstraction would focus the debate on the principles rather than the operationalization of consociational theory. For some of the characteristics or favorable conditions of consociationalism that are now alleged to be missing from certain cases, functional equivalents may exist that would have been identifiable on the basis of more generalized hypotheses. Such a theory would also broaden consociationalism's

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applicability as a prescriptive theory. In future cases, consociationalism need not take exactly the same form and need not be made possible by exactly the same favorable conditions that can be discerned in historical cases.

This reformulation of consociationalism can build on the deductive work of scholars such as Nordlinger (1972), who essentially "theorized consociationalism as a Nash equilibrium" (Lustick 1997:99), Rogowski (1974), and Tsebelis (1990). The core of consociationalism remains that democratic instability resulting from social segmentation can be avoided when the segmental elites refrain from competition. This may take the form of Lijphart's four characteristics, but other nonmajoritarian mechanisms for conflict resolution (such as arbitration by a neutral judiciary, technocratic experts, etc) should not be excluded. The segmental elites will refrain from competition (*a*) when the conditions or institutional arrangements are such that they think it is beneficial and/or appropriate for them to do so, and (*b*) when their followers agree with them or, if they do not, when high information costs and lack of intrasegmental competition provide segmental elites with security. These conditions will include some of the "favorable conditions" discussed in this review, but here in particular consociational theory is not out of the egg yet, with important remaining questions about the impact of the nature of the cleavages and about intrasegmental elite-mass relations.

Meanwhile, it should be noted that consociational democracy seems to be retreating from its empirical region of origin, Western Europe. In such countries as Austria, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, the social cleavages have eroded, and it may be that consociationalism itself has weakened the social segmentation to which it was a response. Where are these countries now in Lijphart's original two-by-two typology of democracies (Figure 1)? The answer depends on what happened to elite cooperation. If it has given way to competition again, the former consociational democracies can be classified as centripetal democracies, but if the elites have continued in a consensual style, these countries are now depoliticized democracies (i.e. government by elite cartel without social segmentation). At first, desegmentation seemed to be accompanied by more competitive elite behavior (e.g. a period of single-party governments in Austria, a shift toward minimum winning coalitions in the Netherlands), but today, the former consociational democracies appear to have retained many consensual characteristics (Lijphart 1989b, 1997:696). Meanwhile, other Western European countries, some of which never experienced social segmentation to any significant degree, are also moving toward a more consensual political style. Katz & Mair (1995:22), for example, observe a movement of political parties toward a position further away from civil society and closer to the state, but also closer to each other "as party programmes become more similar, and as campaigns are in any case oriented more towards agreed goals rather than contentious means." Katz & Mair call this process the emergence of the cartel party, and if that term alone does not provoke associations with consociationalism's government by elite cartel, they argue that "it is also a process that is likely to develop most easily in those political cultures marked by a tradition of inter-party cooperation and accommodation" (Katz & Mair 1995:17).

It is exactly what Lijphart foresaw in the same publication in which he first used the term consociationalism. "The model democracy of the New Europe is characterized both by cultural homogeneity and by consociational patterns of government" (Lijphart 1968:37). Neither Lijphart nor Katz & Mair see this as a particularly positive development; the absence of true opposition within the system is likely to result in opposition against the system. This hypothesis perfectly fits the rise of populist parties of the radical right in recent elections in Austria, Belgium, and Switzerland. So far, the Netherlands escaped this fate; Luther & Deschouwer argue that the Dutch exception is explained by the early responsiveness of the political system to anti-consociational challenges in that country (1999:259–63). As I noted above, if the main line of division in society is no longer between semipermanent segments at the mass level but between elites and masses, democracy may be served better by a relative emphasis on competition. In this respect, an important contradiction exists between Lijphart's work on consociational democracy and his elaboration of consensus democracy. Consensus democracy is advocated as a "kinder, gentler" democracy, not only in deeply divided societies, but also in culturally homogeneous countries (Lijphart 1999:302). The very logic of consociationalism, however, inescapably leads to a prescription of more adversarial politics if social segmentation has vanished.

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