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**POWER-SHARING AND GROUP AUTONOMY IN THE 1990S AND THE 21ST CENTURY**

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The assignment that I was given by the organizers of this conference was not to write yet another paper on consociational or power-sharing democracy, but to prepare an introductory overview of the general topic of "Constitutional Design in the Third Wave." This is not an easy task for me. For three reasons, I cannot help but look at this question through the prism of consociational theory. First, the conference as a whole is about more than just "Constitutional Design": the title of the conference also includes the ingredients of "Conflict Management" and "Democracy." Second, I have been "Mr. Consociation"--as the late Stein Rokkan referred to me on several occasions--for a long time, and I still believe that consociational democracy is not only the optimal form of democracy for deeply divided societies but also, for the most deeply divided countries, the only feasible solution.

Third, what has happened in the 1990s is that ethnic divisions have replaced the Cold War as the world's most serious source of violent conflict. This phenomenon has clashed with the third wave of democratization. In fact, this third wave, which started with the democratic revolution in Portugal in 1974 (Huntington 1991), culminated in the early 1990s with the demise of the Soviet Union, but ran into trouble by the mid-1990s. Larry Diamond (1996: 28) calls attention to "the increasing shallowness of democratization in the latter part of the third wave" as demonstrated by "the continued growth of electoral democracy, but stagnation of liberal democracy"--and mere "electoral" or "illiberal" democracy is, of course, not really a democratic form of government at all. In another five years or so, when we shall be in the middle of the first decade of the 21st century, we may well decide in retrospect that the third wave of democratization ended in the mid-1990s and that a third reverse wave started at about the same time. If this is indeed the case, I would place a major portion of the blame on the problem of ethnic conflict and on the inability of constitutional designers to deal constructively with this problem.

Fortunately, I believe that I can combine the objective of providing an introductory overview with my strong predisposition toward consociational theory by arguing that consociational theory, when broadly defined in terms of the key elements of executive power-sharing (grand coalition) and group autonomy, is a very comprehensive theory that, first, commands widespread support among the experts, and, second, has a broad substantive range that includes the four topics that are next on the agenda of this conference: the debate between majoritarianism and power-sharing, the parliamentarism vs. presidentialism debate, the questions of decentralization, federalism, and autonomy, and the design of electoral systems. I shall return to the relationship between consociational theory and these four subject matters later in this paper. I shall also return later to the controversial matter of how narrowly or broadly the basic consociational concepts have been and should be defined, because I am very much aware that some of my critics have accused me of insufficient precision in this respect.

#### POINTS OF AGREEMENT AMONG THE EXPERTS

I believe that most experts on divided societies and constitutional engineering are in broad agreement on several points. First, they agree that deep ethnic and other societal divisions pose a grave problem for democracy and that ceteris paribus it is more difficult to establish and maintain democracy in divided than in homogeneous societies. This proposition can be traced back to John Stuart Mill's (1861: 230) assertion that democracy is "next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities"--that is, in a multi-ethnic society--and completely impossible in linguistically divided countries, where the people "read and speak different languages." Mill puts this in stronger terms than today's experts do, but the general thrust of the argument has remained the same. Second, the experts agree that the problem of ethnic and other deep divisions is greater in countries that are not yet democratic or not fully democratic than in the well-established democracies. This also means that such deep divisions present a major obstacle to further democratization in the 21st century. On these two points, I cannot think of any expert who disagrees, and agreement appears to be universal or near-universal.

The third point of broad but not universal agreement--my co-speaker at this introductory roundtable, Donald L. Horowitz is a notable dissenter--is that the two key ingredients for successful democracy in divided societies are the sharing of executive power and group autonomy. These are what I have called the two "primary characteristics" of consociational democracy. Power-sharing means the participation of the representatives of all significant groups in political decision-making, especially at the executive level; group autonomy means that these groups have authority to run their own internal affairs, especially in the areas of education and culture (Lijphart 1995: 856).

Agreement on the central role of these two characteristics extends far beyond the consociational school. A good example is Ted Robert Gurr's (1993) book Minorities at Risk, which is, as the subtitle accurately reflects, a truly Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts. Gurr clearly does not take his inspiration from consociational theory and, in fact, he barely mentions it. Instead, he pursues a relentlessly inductive strategy which is so full of detailed operational definitions and explanations that I doubt that many readers reach the two concluding chapters that make up the final 10 percent of the text. This is very unfortunate because these final chapters contain a series of significant conclusions about the possibilities of settling ethnic conflicts. The overall evidence shows that such conflicts are (1) by no means intractable, (2) that they can usually be accommodated by "some combination of the policies and institutions of autonomy and power-sharing," and (3) that democracies have an especially good record of ethnic accommodation (Gurr 1993: 290-92, emphasis added). In order to distinguish the more general recommendation of power-sharing and autonomy, as in Gurr's book, from the consociational model, I shall refer to the former as the sharing/autonomy prescription.

If there is such strong agreement on the sharing/autonomy prescription, while consociational theory has been under attack by scores of critics--including the all-out assaults by Brian Barry (1975a, 1975b), M. C. P. M. van Schendelen (1984), David Laitin (1987), and Ian Lustick (1997)--wouldn't it be better to simply forget about the consociational literature and all the controversy it has generated and concentrate instead on the two key concepts of power-sharing and autonomy that we can agree on? This is a legitimate question but I think that the answer should be "no." For one

thing, consociational theory recommends two additional ingredients that can strengthen executive power-sharing and autonomy: the "secondary characteristics" of proportionality and mutual veto. For another, power-sharing and autonomy as well as proportionality and the veto can assume many different forms, and useful guidelines concerning the relative advantages and disadvantages of these institutional forms can be found in the consociational literature. Moreover, it is not necessary for consociational theory to surrender to its critics, because almost all of the criticisms are unjustified or exaggerated.

### CRITIQUES OF POWER-SHARING AND AUTONOMY

It is neither necessary nor helpful in this paper to discuss all of the objections that have been raised against consociational theory. For a host of relatively minor bones of contention, I can simply refer to my book on South Africa, in which I devote an entire chapter to a comprehensive and systematic response to my critics (Lijphart 1985: 83-117). However, I think that I should summarize the six most important criticisms and my responses to them, especially because these criticisms also apply to the sharing/autonomy prescription on which, as I have just argued, there is broad agreement and approval. Three of the criticisms focus on alleged deficiencies of executive power-sharing: (1) that it is not sufficiently democratic, (2) that it cannot work in practice, and (3) that a key explanation for its failure is that it does not contain incentives for moderate behavior. Two critiques target alleged problems of giving autonomy to ethnic groups: (4) that especially regional autonomy is a slippery slope that is likely to lead to secession and partition, and (5) that it strengthens rather than weakens the cohesion and distinctiveness of ethnic groups and, as a result, increases conflict between them. The sixth objection is that both elements of the sharing/autonomy prescription as well as the other elements of the consociational model are based on European or Western experiences and are foreign and unsuitable for multi-ethnic societies in other parts of the world.<sup>1</sup>

1. When executive power-sharing takes the form of a grand coalition cabinet, that is, a coalition of all of the major parties, it conflicts with the view that a strong opposition is "the sine qua non of contemporary democracy" and that the opposition's prime purpose is "to become the government" (Lawson 1993: 192-93). It also fails the "turnover" and "two-turnover" tests that are

frequently used for determining whether a democracy has become stable and consolidated; for instance, according to Huntington's (1991: 266-67) two-turnover test, "a democracy may be viewed as consolidated if the party or group that takes power in the initial election at the time of transition [to democracy] loses a subsequent election and turns over power to those election winners, and if those election winners then peacefully turn over power to the winners of a later election." My response to the opposition and turnover criteria is that they are narrowly based on one conception of democracy, the majoritarian conception, which does not exhaust the range of democratic possibilities.

A related criticism faults the compromises negotiated, often behind close doors, by the leaders of the various groups. Moreover, power-sharing systems often use list forms of proportional representation (PR), in which party leaders have a great deal of influence on the composition of the lists and hence on who can get elected. These observations are not wrong, but it is wrong to imply a stark contrast with majoritarian democracy. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the flagship of majoritarian democracy, all important decisions are typically prepared by bureaucrats, adopted in the cabinet in complete secrecy, and, after being announced, hardly ever changed under parliamentary or public pressure. And, in spite of Britain's plurality electoral system, party leaders are usually able to reserve safe seats for themselves and to oppose the nomination of undesirable candidates by constituency organizations. Elite domination does not vary a great deal among democracies. The difference between majority rule and power-sharing is not whether leaders do or do not predominate but whether they tend to be adversarial or cooperative.

2. When power is broadly shared, the critics argue, it will be difficult or even impossible to make decisions; the result is immobilism, deadlock, and, in the end, democratic breakdown. The critics have also placed great emphasis on the failure of power-sharing democracy in two of its major examples--in Cyprus in 1963 and in Lebanon in 1975--as well as the British government's lack of success in all of its efforts to solve the Northern Ireland problem by power-sharing (even after the Good Friday Agreement of 1998). However, there are also clear cases where power-sharing has worked successfully in ethnically divided countries--Switzerland since 1943, Belgium since 1970,

Lebanon from 1943 to 1975, and Malaysia from 1955 to 1969--as well as a few more countries which I also regard as power-sharing cases but that are more controversial--Colombia from 1958 to 1974, India ever since 1947, and South Africa since 1994.

Moreover, when the failures of power-sharing in Cyprus and Lebanon, in 1963 and 1975 respectively, are analyzed more closely, they actually demonstrate the strength and promise of power-sharing instead of its weakness. In the Lebanese case, first of all, the outbreak of the civil war in 1975 should not obscure the fact that power-sharing worked quite well in this severely divided country from 1943 to 1975. Second, a major part of the blame for the collapse of power-sharing belongs not to internal problems caused by the power-sharing system itself but to Lebanon's precarious position in the international arena of the Middle East and, in particular, to repeated Palestinian, Syrian, and Israeli interventions. In this sense, the civil war that broke out in 1975 was not an ordinary civil war but an international conflict fought on Lebanese soil. Third, it must be admitted that Lebanon's power-sharing system had some weak spots. The Christian sects continued to have greater representation and influence in the government in spite of the fact that the Muslims had gradually become the majority of the population, and the most powerful political office, the presidency, was permanently assigned to the Maronite Christians. But the Lebanese themselves have recognized these problems and have tried to solve them. The 1989 Taif Accord changed the 6:5 ratio for parliamentary elections favoring the Christians to equal parliamentary representation for Christians and Muslims, and it also roughly equalized the powers of the Maronite president and the Sunni Muslim prime minister.

The most important lesson of the Lebanese case is that power-sharing needed to be repaired and improved rather than replaced. In the eyes of most Lebanese and knowledgeable foreign observers, a switch to a majoritarian form of democracy has not been regarded as a realistic option. It is even more significant that the same conclusion applies to Cyprus, where admittedly power-sharing never worked well. Instituted in the 1960 constitution, it was ended by the 1963 civil war, and it appeared to be permanently doomed by the Turkish invasion in 1974 and the subsequent de facto partition of the island into a Greek Cypriot southern state and a Turkish Cypriot northern state.

Nevertheless, since 1985, UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar and his two successors have made several proposals for a unified Cyprus that strikingly resemble the basic power-sharing features of the 1960 constitution. Their efforts demonstrate their recognition of the fact that power-sharing, although it may not succeed, represents the optimal chance for a successful solution. Similarly, the British government's failure until 1998 to have its power-sharing proposals for Northern Ireland accepted and, after 1998, to have them implemented has not budged it from its basic conviction that power-sharing is the only possible and acceptable solution there.

3. A special reason why executive power-sharing is likely or even bound to fail has been advanced by Donald L. Horowitz (1991: 171, 175). He argues that its fatal flaw is that lacks incentives for compromise. In multiparty situations with ethnically based parties, "the mere need to form a coalition will not produce compromise. The incentive to compromise, and not merely the incentive to coalesce, is the key to accommodation." Without incentives to compromise, the only coalitions that will be formed are "coalitions of convenience that will dissolve." Coalescence and compromise are indeed analytically distinct, and there are plenty of examples, cited by Horowitz, of coalitions that have been unable to compromise and that, as a result, have fallen apart. But there are also many contrary examples and, logically, the desire to coalesce does imply a need to compromise.

A general and uncontroversial assumption in political science is that political parties want to gain power. Based on this assumption, a further basic premise underlying virtually all coalition theories ever since the pioneering work of William H. Riker (1962) is that, in multiparty systems, parties will want to enter and remain in coalition cabinets. Only more recently have a few coalition theorists, notably Kaare Strom (1990), pointed out that under special conditions parties may prefer not to join governing coalitions; for instance, parties may prefer to stay in the opposition if they believe that this will enhance their electoral fortunes and hence their ability to enter future cabinet coalitions in a stronger position, and they may also be satisfied with a formal opposition role if influential legislative committees give them the opportunity to have a major say in government policy without being in the government themselves (especially if the government is a relatively weak minority government). But these are the exceptions, and the more usual inclination of parties is to

want to be included in cabinets. Because the only way for ethnic or any other parties not just to enter but also to stay in the cabinet is to reach compromises with their coalition partners, they have a very strong incentive to compromise--political power!--instead of no such incentive as Horowitz mistakenly argues.

4. Some critics have argued that autonomy, when groups are geographically concentrated and when autonomy takes the form of a federal or strongly decentralized system, is dangerous because the groups involved are unlikely to be satisfied with it and will press for outright secession. For instance, Eric A. Nordlinger (1972: 32) excludes federalism from his recommended set of conflict-regulating practices in divided societies because it may result in the breakup of the state: "The combination of territorially distinctive segments and federalism's grant of partial autonomy sometimes provides additional impetus to demands for greater autonomy," and, when these demands are refused, "secession and civil war may follow." One answer to this argument is that it is hard to imagine that the imposition of a unitary and centralized democratic system would be able to prevent secession if the basic ingredient of separatist sentiment would be strong. More important, however, is that the empirical evidence does not support Nordlinger's fears. On the basis of his worldwide comparative analysis, Gurr's (1993: 300-01) conclusion is as follows: "Neither in theory nor in practice is there anything inherent in autonomy agreements that leads to future civil war or disintegration of the state. The recent historical record shows that, on balance, autonomy agreements can be an effective means for managing regional conflicts."

5. Another alleged weakness of group autonomy, even if it is not on a territorial basis, is that it may encourage ethnic conflict by explicitly recognizing the legitimacy of ethnic groups and by making them stronger, more cohesive, and more distinctive. However, the existence of strong and autonomous ethnic groups does not necessarily translate into serious conflict among them. On the contrary, the strengthened ethnic groups are designed to play a constructive role in conflict resolution. Gurr's (1993: 323, emphasis added) conclusion on this matter is again well worth quoting. In his final chapter, he raises the question: "What is the functional place of communal groups in the global system of states?" He answers that the optimal approach is "the positive-sum



coexistence of ethnic groups and plural states," which means "both recognizing and strengthening communal groups within the existing state system."

6. Because power-sharing, autonomy, and other aspects of the consociational model have been studied more extensively in the European cases and by European scholars, it is sometimes alleged to be a European or Western model that is foreign and unsuitable for multiethnic societies in other parts of the world. This criticism is clearly erroneous because it ignores such major examples as Lebanon, Malaysia, and Colombia, where power-sharing and autonomy were developed by indigenous leaders without external influence or assistance. It is also worth point out that Sir Arthur Lewis, whose 1965 book Politics in West Africa can be regarded as the first modern treatise on consociational theory, was not a European or a student of European politics but a native of the Caribbean island of St. Lucia and a black scholar whose interest was in African politics. Finally, numerous non-Western scholars and political leaders have emphasized that majority rule violates their native traditions of trying to arrive at consensus through lengthy deliberations--traditions that correspond closely to the power-sharing idea. For instance, Lewis (1965: 86) himself states that in Africa, "the tribe has made its decisions by discussion, in much the way that coalitions function; this kind of democratic procedure is at the heart of the original institutions of the people." Another example is Philippine statesman and scholar Raul S. Manglapus's (1987: 69) emphasis not only on the strong democratic traditions that he finds in non-Western countries generally but also on the fact that these traditions are power-sharing rather than majoritarian traditions: "the common characteristic [is] the element of consensus as opposed to adversarial decisions."

#### PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION AND MEASUREMENT

My above defense of the sharing/autonomy prescription and the consociational model do not mean that I believe consociational theory to be flawless. An especially valid and serious criticism is that its key concepts have been very hard to define and measure precisely. I have come to the conclusion, however, that this is an insoluble problem and that we shall simply have to live with concepts that have very important theoretical and policy significance but that cannot be measured precisely. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, I made a major effort to operationalize and quantify

degrees of executive power-sharing, degrees of federalism and decentralization, degrees of proportionality, degrees of minority veto power, and so on. This led to the development of the concept of consensus democracy, of which every aspect can be expressed in quantitative terms, and which is clearly related to the consociational democracy--but which is just as clearly not the same as consociational democracy (Lijphart 1984, 1999). Let me add that the many other authors who have emphasized this problem have not been able to propose constructive solutions either.

Is the lack of precision in consociational theory acceptable or does it involve too much "conceptual stretching" (Sartori, 1970)? Lustick (1997) argues that so much stretching has happened that the entire enterprise has become meaningless. The substantive problem is that the basic characteristics of consociational democracy are inherently stretchable: they can assume a large number of different institutional forms. For instance, the most straightforward form of executive power-sharing is that of a grand coalition cabinet of ethnic parties in a parliamentary system, as in Malaysia and South Africa. Another possibility is a grand coalition in cabinets, defined not in partisan terms but more broadly in terms of the representation of linguistic or other groups in a pre-determined ratio, such as the equal representation of Dutch-speakers and French-speakers in Belgian cabinets. During the period of the Congress Party's dominance in India, cabinets were one-party cabinets, but close to proportional shares of ministerships were given to the different linguistic groups, states, and regions of the country as well as to the Muslim minority of about 12 percent of the population and the even smaller Sikh minority (roughly 2 percent).

The above examples are all parliamentary systems, but grand coalitions can also occur in non-parliamentary systems. In the Swiss separation-of-powers system, the executive is constituted in such a way that all major religious and linguistic groups as well as the four largest political parties are given representation. In presidential systems of government, a grand coalition is more difficult, but not impossible, to arrange: the top governmental offices--such as the presidency, prime ministership, and assembly speakership in Lebanon, and the presidency and vice-presidency in Cyprus--may be allocated to specified ethnic or religious groups. In the 1958-74 Colombian system,

executive power-sharing was in part achieved sequentially: it was agreed that Liberal and Conservative presidents would alternate in office.

Can all of these formal and informal rules and practices be subsumed under the one concept of executive power-sharing? My feeling is that they have enough of a common core to justify it. Conceptual stretching is an error to be avoided--but so is conceptual rigidity and conceptual timidity.

#### PRACTICAL GUIDELINES DERIVED FROM CONSOCIATIONAL THEORY

As indicated in the introductory section of this paper, I believe that consociational theory has considerable practical utility in that it provides specific guidelines and recommendations for the design of power-sharing, autonomy, and other consociational institutions. All of the consociational principles can assume a great variety of institutional forms, but these forms do not serve the basic purpose of ethnic accommodation equally well: some can be recommended, while others should be warned against. I shall discuss these guidelines under the four headings that correspond to the four next topics on the agenda of this conference.

1. The power-sharing versus majoritarian debate. The first warning is, very obviously, against attempts to establish a pure majoritarian system with a one-party cabinet, a party system with two dominant parties, and a plurality system of voting. However, somewhat less obviously, the warning also extends to Horowitz's vote-pooling recommendations, which he regards as alternatives to majoritarianism, but which from a consociational perspective do not differ a great deal from majority-rule democracy. His key vote-pooling proposal is the alternative vote in single-member districts. To give a hypothetical example, if there are three candidates, A, B, and C, supported by 45 percent, 40 percent, and 15 percent of the voters respectively, A and B will have to bid for the second preferences of C's supporters in order to win--which will, according to Horowitz, reward moderation. The problem is that precisely the same argument can be used in favor of the plurality method. In the same example, but under plurality rules, many of C's supporters will not want to waste their votes on C's hopeless candidacy, or may not even be able to vote for C at all because C has wisely decided not to pursue a hopeless candidacy. Here, too, A and B will have to appeal to C's supporters in order to win.

The alternative vote resembles the majority-runoff method (also often called the double-ballot or second-ballot system) even more closely. In the same hypothetical example, C is now eliminated in the first round, and A and B have to compete for the votes of C's supporters in the runoff. The alternative vote accomplishes in one round of voting what requires two ballots in the majority-runoff system. The incentives for moderation are exactly the same. The majority-runoff method was commonly used in Western Europe for parliamentary elections until the beginning of the 20th century. In most cases, it was replaced with proportional representation, and the main reason for this change, as noted by Rokkan (1970: 157), was the unsatisfactory operation of the majority-runoff in linguistically and religiously divided societies and the need to provide for minority representation. This historical evidence throws additional doubt on the value of the alternative vote for the management of ethnic conflict. Both the logic and the practical effect of the alternative vote are clearly majoritarian.

The debate on this subject between Horowitz, myself, and others (see, for instance, Sisk 1996) has been mainly on the relative advantages and disadvantages of vote-pooling versus power-sharing. A different and at least equally important question is: which of the alternatives is more likely to be chosen in a negotiated transition to democracy?<sup>2</sup> It is hard to imagine that in a situation where one or more relatively small minorities face a majority or several large groups, the minorities will be willing to accept a system that does not offer them the chance to be represented by their own leaders but merely by the more moderate leaders of majority or the larger groups. In the case of Northern Ireland, for instance, it seems highly unlikely that Protestant rule, with the proviso that the more moderate Protestants would be in charge, would be acceptable to the Catholic minority. The only situation where the alternative vote may be freely agreed on is that of a divided society with groups of roughly equal size, such as the two ethnic groups in Fiji; but this kind of situation is very rare. A theoretical possibility is that of an imposed solution, such as a decision by the British government to institute the alternative vote in Northern Ireland by fiat. In addition to the intrinsic disadvantages of an imposed instead of a negotiated solution, it also seems highly unrealistic to me to expect that such an imposed solution could be successful in Northern Ireland.

2. The presidential-parliamentary debate. The choice between these alternatives is an easy one from the consociational point of view: parliamentary government is clearly superior. One reason is the majoritarian nature of presidential elections. As Juan Linz (1994: 18) states, "perhaps the most important implication of presidentialism is that it introduces a strong element of zero-sum game into democratic politics with rules that tend toward a 'winner-take-all' outcome." Moreover, it is much more difficult to form grand coalitions of the representatives of all significant groups in a presidential than in a parliamentary system. The difference between these systems is usually defined in terms of two criteria: in parliamentary systems, the executive is selected by the legislature and is dependent on legislative confidence, whereas in presidential systems, the executive is elected, directly or indirectly, by the voters and is not dependent on the confidence of the legislature. An equally important third difference is that the executive in a parliamentary system is a collegial body--the cabinet--whereas the president is a one-person executive with a presidential cabinet consisting of advisers to the president instead of co-decision-makers. The collegial nature of the cabinet in a parliamentary system is obviously a much more favorable setting for forming a broad power-sharing executive.

The recommendation against presidential government also applies to the various "diluted" forms of presidentialism; even if some sharing of executive power is introduced, the zero-sum nature of presidential elections does not change because there can be only one winner. Parliamentarism remains the better option. In semi-presidential systems, there can be considerable power-sharing between president, prime minister, and cabinet, but it is also possible for the president to be even more powerful than in most pure presidential systems. In France, the best-known example of semi-presidentialism, the president usually exercises predominant power, and the 1962-74 and 1981-86 periods can even be labeled "hyperpresidential" phases (Keeler and Schain 1997: 95-97). Horowitz (1991: 205-14) favors a president elected by the alternative vote or a similar vote-pooling method, but in other respects his president does not differ from presidents in pure presidential systems.

Much the same applies to the Colombian presidency in the 1958-74 period in spite of alternation between the two main parties and parity in the cabinet; a prime minister and a cabinet in a

parliamentary system would have been a better way to institute power-sharing. Finally, in the Lebanese case (not a pure case of presidentialism because the president is elected by the legislature), considerable executive power-sharing is achieved by the rule that the president be a Maronite and the prime minister a Sunni, and that the cabinet be composed according to a roughly proportional sectarian formula; moreover, the prime minister's powers were increased to approximately the same level as the president's powers. However, the presidency is still widely regarded as the most important and prestigious office, and there can be only one president.

The Lebanese and Colombian systems have the additional drawback that they are systems in which the constituent groups are pre-determined, that is, a system that explicitly names the population groups that will act as the principal partners in power-sharing--the religious sects in Lebanon and the two traditional parties in Colombia. It is preferable to allow the groups to identify and define themselves. Pre-determination is inevitably discriminatory--in favor of the groups that are included, and against groups, especially smaller groups, that are not recognized. Pre-determination also entails the assignment of individuals to the specified groups, which may be controversial, offensive, or even completely unacceptable to many citizens. It also means that there is no place for individuals or groups who reject the premise that society should be organized on an ethnic or communal basis. Finally, in systems of pre-determination, there is a strong tendency to rigidly fix shares of representation on a permanent basis, such as the 6:5 Christian-Muslim ratio in pre-Taif Lebanon and the 7:3 Greek-Turkish ratio in the cabinet according to the 1960 constitution of Cyprus. In contrast, self-determination can be entirely non-discriminatory, neutral, and flexible.

The distinction between pre-determination and self-determination also applies to cabinets in parliamentary systems, and ceteris paribus self-determination is to be preferred. An example of pre-determined groups are the Dutch-speakers and French-speakers who, according to the Belgian constitution should participate in the cabinet in a 1:1 ratio. A good illustration of self-determination is the provisional 1994 constitution of South Africa which gave any party, whether ethnic or not, with a minimum of 5 percent of the seats in parliament the right to participate in the cabinet on a proportional basis.

3. Decentralization, federalism, and autonomy. According to consociational theory, federalism offers an excellent opportunity for group autonomy if the groups are geographically concentrated. The logic of this recommendation entails that the federal boundaries coincide as much as possible with the ethnic or other group boundaries, as in India, Switzerland, and Belgium. It contrasts with Seymour Martin Lipset's (1963:81) proposition that federalism should "crosscut the social structure"; Lipset specifically recommends against federalism that divides a country "between different ethnic, religious, or linguistic areas, as it does in India and Canada. Democracy needs cleavage within linguistic or religious groups, not between them." Furthermore, in order to be able to make the federal dividing lines coincide as much as possible with the ethnic boundaries, consociational theory recommends a federalism with relatively many and relatively small constituent units.

When groups are dispersed geographically, autonomy can be instituted on a non-territorial basis. Here, too, a distinction can be made between pre-determined and self-determined forms. Belgian federalism is partly non-territorial (for the approximately 15 percent of the population who live in Brussels) and it is a pre-determined system in that people are classified as French-speakers or Dutch-speakers. A good model of non-territorial autonomy on a self-determined basis is the Dutch system of educational autonomy adopted in 1917: all schools, public and private, were to receive equal financial support from the state in proportion to their enrollment. Although the new law was primarily designed to accommodate the main religious groups and their religious schools, it was formulated in neutral language and allowed any group to establish and run schools as long as basic educational standards would be observed. As a result, it has also been taken advantage of by small secular groups interested in particular educational philosophies to establish, for instance, Montessori schools.

4. Electoral system design in new democracies. Proportionality is a general principle of consociational democracy that applies not only to the electoral system but also to the composition of the public service and to the allocation of public funds (as in the example of Dutch education in the previous paragraph). As far as the electoral system is concerned, the proportionality principle

dictates some form of proportional representation (PR). PR is clearly preferable to majoritarian methods like plurality, the majority-runoff, and the alternative vote. It is also preferable to semi-PR because, as the latter's label indicates, it is only partly proportional. And it is superior to systems that try to achieve proportionality without the benefit of straightforward PR, such as the Lebanese system in which, in each district, candidates have to be elected according to a pre-determined sectarian ratio, for instance, two Maronites, one Sunni, and one Druze in a four-member district. It has all of the disadvantages of pre-determination discussed earlier.

With regard to the specific form of PR, three further recommendations can be derived from consociational theory. In order to encourage the formation of cohesive and disciplined parties with strong leaders, it is wise to give party organizations the preponderant power over nominations. Therefore, (1) list PR is preferable to the single transferable vote, and (2) list PR with closed or almost closed lists is preferable to open-list PR. In addition, (3) in order to obtain full or close to full proportionality, it is wise not to introduce high electoral thresholds. The electoral thresholds in PR systems range from no formal threshold in South Africa and the very low 0.67 percent threshold in the Netherlands to the 5 percent threshold in Germany and New Zealand. The appropriate threshold depends on the particular minorities and their respective sizes in a given country, but my inclination would be to recommend a threshold not exceeding about 3 percent.

A final distinction is between formal and informal rules. Should consociational rules be laid down in formal documents or rely on merely informal and unwritten agreements and understandings among the leaders of the main groups? My reading of the evidence is that informal rules generally work better because they are more flexible--but perhaps also because they reflect a higher level of trust among groups and group leaders. When sufficient mutual trust is lacking and inter-group relations are highly contentious, there is probably no alternative to formal constitutional and legal rules to govern power-sharing and autonomy in deeply divided societies.

NOTES:

1. See also my discussion of these criticisms in the [Encyclopedia of Democracy](#) from which the following paragraphs liberally borrow (Lijphart, 1995, 858-61).

2. I owe this insight to Jennifer N. Collins, Ph.D. candidate in political science at the University of California, San Diego.



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