Constitutional Design and Comparative Democratic Performance*

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Measures of Democratic Performance

It is fashionable to claim that constitutional design affects democratic performance. The strong version of the claim takes constitutional design to be the primary influence. Weaker versions recognize the contextual importance of economic development or political culture. It is usual to support the claim with measures of democratic performance. But performance is understood in different ways, and this tends to muddy the waters. It is therefore helpful to begin by distinguishing the three main interpretations of democratic performance as, first, regime endurance or longevity; second, government efficacy; and third, the delivery of liberal democratic values, or as a measure of the quality of democracy itself. It is worth adding that our own inquiry will address the quality of democracy.

Studies of regime endurance examine the ‘survival and death’ of political regimes in order to assess the ‘hazard rates’ or ‘survival rates’ of different types of regime or different economic or cultural settings (Przeworski et al. 1996, 39). It may be assumed either that democracies can consolidate (Stepan and Skach 1993, 5) or that there is no such thing as democratic consolidation (Przeworski et al. 1996, 50). Studies of government efficacy, in contrast, tend to focus on macroeconomic management, including rates of growth, inflation and unemployment (Lijphart 1993, 1994; Crepaz 1996), or on social policy and welfare provision (Lijphart 1994). Measures of government stability and political violence have also been used (Powell 1982), but the measures themselves may be less reliable, or, at worst, trivial. But, whatever the measures, the clear intention is to assess ‘government performance’ (Lijphart 1994, 4), not democratic performance per se.

It might then be expected that an assessment of the quality of democracy would focus exclusively on measures of different liberal democratic values. As Lijphart argues, ‘the term “quality” refers to the degree to which a system meets such democratic norms as representativeness, accountability, equality and participation’ (Lijphart 1993, 149). In fact, Lijphart himself mixes measures of these intrinsic values (electoral turnout, women’s representation, Dahl’s index of democratic quality) with extrinsic measures of government performance (economic growth, inflation, family policy and so forth) (Lijphart 1993, 1994). Similarly, Powell mixes the intrinsic measure of participation with the extrinsic measures of stability and violence (Powell 1982). By combining the measures in this fashion Powell was able to examine the structure of the trade-offs between democratic performance (participation) and government performance (stability and social peace) (Powell 1982, chapter 2).

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1 Przeworski et al. look at political regimes in 135 countries observed annually between 1950 or the year of independence or the first year for which economic data are available (entry year), and 1990 or the last year for which data are available (exit year), for a total of 4,318 country-years.
2 Lijphart’s measure of ‘family policy,’ for example, includes maternity and parental leave, paid and unpaid; public daycare programmes and government support services; and the flexibility of retirement schemes.
3 Powell has the laudable aim of focussing on the question of political order. But the measures of political violence taken from eg. Taylor and Hudson (1972) and Hibbs (1973) suffer the consistency problems of all events data, while government stability is interpreted as the average durability of governments or presidents, or as the likelihood of government enjoying a legislative majority (Powell 1982, chapter 2).
Lijphart, rather more purposefully, sets out to prove that there is no trade-off between ‘representativity’ and government efficacy (Lijphart 1994).

Liberal democratic values have also been conceived as the ‘possibilities for citizen control’ (Powell 1989, 108) or as the congruence between ‘citizen preferences and policy choices’ (Huber and Powell 1994, 291). It is assumed that democratic quality depends on the degree of this control, and that this congruence is a major goal of liberal democracy. These assumptions appear safe, although it may be objected that ‘the purpose of politics is not simply to implement preferences, but instead to select them’ (Sunstein 1993, 348). This caveat is especially apt when the point of looking at preferences is to assess the democratic quality of different constitutional designs.

Analogous concerns attend the attempts to measure the ‘satisfaction with democracy’ under different constitutional designs (Anderson and Guillory 1997), or the degree of ‘encompassment’ of these designs to see which are ‘more responsive to the wishes of the electorate’ (Crepaz 1996, 99).

Non-constitutional Determinants of Democratic Performance

There were early suggestions that the richer a democracy, the higher its rates of participation and the lower the incidence of political violence (Powell 1982, 38–40). More recently, it has been asserted quite categorically that when democracies achieve an income level of US$6,000 per capita or above, ‘they are impregnable and can be expected to live forever’ (Przeworski et al. 1996, 41). On the other hand, ‘poor democracies, particularly those with annual per capita income of less than US$1,000, are extremely fragile,’ although ‘the faster the economy grows the more likely democracy is to survive,’ especially if growth is accompanied by ‘a moderate rate of inflation’ (Przeworski et al. 1996, 42). But, ‘once established in a developed country, democracy endures regardless of how it performs’ (Przeworski et al. 1996, 41, my italics). The principal determinant of performance as measured by regime endurance is therefore the economy.

Very different, but not entirely incongruent explanations of democratic performance have been advanced at the level of political culture. Most recently, the World Values Surveys have supported the systematic investigation and discovery of ‘coherent and relatively stable’ cross-cultural differences that are shown to have ‘important behavioral consequences,’ including the ‘persistence of stable democracy’ (Inglehart and Carballo 1997, 46). The study maps the states of the world onto the ‘two key cultural dimensions’ of modernization (traditional versus secular-rational authority).

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4 Lijphart concludes categorically that ‘the conventional wisdom is wrong is positing a trade-off between the advantages of plurality and PR systems,’ because the superior representation of PR systems does not trade-off against inferior government efficacy (Lijphart 1994, 8).

5 Sunstein insists that ‘a central goal of constitutional democracy is to secure a realm for public discussion and collective selection of preferences, while guarding against the dangers of factional tyranny and self-interested representation’ (Sunstein 1993, 352). It is fundamental to democratic constitutions that they both facilitate the expression of wishes and interests, and constrain them in important ways; both enable the formation of a majority will, and restrain its scope of action.

6 Anderson and Guillory refer specifically to Huber and Powell (1994) and state that ‘we expect satisfaction with the system to be greater when there is a greater likelihood of congruence of policy and citizen preferences’ (Anderson and Guillory 1997, 69).

7 Further, ‘no democracy has ever fallen in a country where per capita income exceeds US$6,055 (Argentina’s level in 1976)’ (Przeworski et al. 1996, 41).
and postmodernization (survival versus well-being), and the higher these states sit on the two dimensions the more likely they are to be democratic, and the more democratic they are likely to be (Inglehart and Carballo 1997, 41). The principal determinant of democratic performance as measured by both regime endurance and (an implication of) democratic quality is therefore the political culture.

The force of these determinants has been recognized by, but not integrated into studies of constitutional design and democratic performance. Thus, Lijphart is content to recommend PR to ‘new democracies,’ with the caveat that ‘there are very many differences, especially cultural differences, between them and the older democracies, and considerable disparities in levels of economic development’ (Lijphart 1994, 12). Powell is more self-critical in admitting that ‘insofar as the constitution embodies values widely held in a society, both constitutional type and performance pattern may be products of its political culture…rather than one being the cause of the other’ (Powell 1982, 67). He perceives a ‘powerful relationship’ between general culture and constitutional type, but reluctantly concludes that ‘no statistical procedure can adequately disentangle them’ (Powell 1982, 69). The general lesson is that any ‘background condition that is conducive to democracy’ may produce a spurious relationship between design and performance (Mainwaring and Shugart 1997, 24). 8

**Constitutional Determinants of Democratic Performance**

Despite his awareness of ‘environmental’ influences, Powell felt able to assert that ‘elements of constitutional design have a substantial impact on democratic performance,’ in particular ‘executive-legislative relations, rules of legislative representation, and federalism’ (Powell 1982, 54). Quantitative analysis of the first element of executive-legislative relations appears to demonstrate the superiority of parliamentarism to presidentialism, with eight out of the nine analyses listed in Appendix A indicating that most stable democracies are parliamentary (even in the inter-war period). The exception to the rule is the analysis by Shugart and Carey (1992) that focuses only on ‘third world’ countries and excludes microstates (so reducing the number of parliamentary democracies in the population). 9 These results seem to confirm the claims of superior parliamentary performance (Riggs 1993, 215; Stepan and Skach 1993, 128; Linz 1994, 71). 10

Stepan and Skach purport to demonstrate that parliamentary democracies have a rate of survival that is more than three times higher than that of presidential democracies,

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8 Mainwaring and Shugart are concerned with the relationship between parliamentarism and democracy, and identify Western Europe, income level, population size and British colonial heritage as the relevant ‘background variables.’ Their universe is comprised of thirty-eight parliamentary democracies that had been democratic for at least ten years in 1994, of which 36.8 per cent were in Western Europe, 44.7 per cent had high income, 57.9 per cent had British heritage, and 63.2 per cent a population of less than five million. On the other hand, of the thirteen presidential democracies that had been democratic for at least ten years in 1994, 84.6 per cent lacked all four of these conditions (Mainwaring and Shugart 1997, 24ff).

9 The study by Huntington suggests that presidential regimes have a higher ‘rate of democratic survival,’ but only for the particular period of 1900-1939.

10 But equally it may be observed that most qualitative analysis of regime breakdown (Linz and Stepan 1977; Linz and Valenzuela 1994; Diamond, Linz and Lipset 1989) focuses on political culture, socio-economic development, economic performance, political institutionalization, in fact anything but constitutional design (Zelaznik 1998).
even controlling for economic development (Stepan and Skach 1993, 10). By way of explanation they regress Vanhanen’s Index of Democracy on his Index of Power Resources (Vanhanen 1990) to produce residuals that are taken as a measure of the superior performance of parliamentary regimes. Przeworski et al. reach very similar results, concluding that ‘democracy’s life expectancy under presidentialism is less than 20 years, while under parliamentarism it is 71 years’ (Przeworski et al. 1996, 45). They too deny that this is just the result of economic development, asserting, on the contrary, that ‘presidential systems are less likely to survive under good economic conditions than parliamentary systems are under bad conditions’ (Przeworski et al. 1996, 46).

Under the rules of legislative representation, constitutional designs are usually divided into plurality and PR (proportional representation) systems, or, in Lijphart’s language, into majoritarian and consensus systems (Lijphart 1984, 1993, 1994). In principle, consensus systems will be more representative, in the double sense of translating votes into seats more proportionally and of including more (discrete) sectors and constituencies (Lijphart 1993, 147; Powell 1989, 108), but multipartism means less government control of the legislature, and possibly less government stability (Powell 1982, 54). The typically two-party competition of majoritarian systems, on the other hand, will produce policies aimed at the median voter (Downs; Powell 1989, 108), and greater government stability and accountability (Powell 1982, 54). Consensus systems, in turn, may entail more inclusive, deliberative and ‘collegial’ decision-making, partly because consensus governments will represent a higher proportion of voters, and so be more ‘encompassing’ (Crepaz 1996, 89).

Some of these propositions have been tested. Lijphart famously concludes that ‘PR is to be preferred over plurality since it offers both better representation and at least as effective public policy-making’ (Lijphart 1994, 8). But when he constructs a

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11 They take all ‘those countries of the world that qualified in the Gastil Political Rights scale as democratic (i.e. no higher than 2.5) for at least one year between 1973 and 1989,’ totaling seventy-seven countries, and then eliminated the twenty-four OECD countries to control for economic development. They found that ‘only five of the twenty-five presidential democracies (twenty per cent) were democratic for any ten consecutive years in the 1973-89 period; but seventeen of the twenty-eight pure parliamentary regimes (sixty-one per cent) were democratic for a consecutive ten year span in the same period.’ They also discovered that only fifteen out of the ninety-three countries becoming independent between 1945 and 1979 were ‘continuous democracies’ in the 1980-89 period, and all of these began life as parliamentary democracies (Stepan and Skach 1993, 10-11).

12 This ‘measure’ is used to argue that ‘presidential systems had a democratic underachiever rate 3.4 times greater than did the parliamentary systems. Further, parliamentary systems in Vanhanen’s set were 1.8 times more likely than presidential systems to be overachievers’ (Stepan and Skach 1993, 7). Vanhanen’s Index of Democracy is an aggregate index of the percentage of the vote for all but the largest party multiplied by the percentage of the population that votes. His Index of Power Resources is an aggregate of many ‘modernization’ variables. Prima facie, it is unlikely that the residuals produced by regressing one on the other are a measure of anything, let alone democratic performance.

13 Typically, majoritarian systems will have a one party majority executive; an executive that predominates over the legislature; a two-party system; a one dimensional party system (parties differ on socio-economic issues); a disproportional electoral system; and a pluralist interest group system. Consensus systems, on the other hand, will have a multiparty coalition executive; executive-legislative balance; a multiparty system; a multidimensional party system (religion, rural-urban, ethnic, regional etc); a more proportional electoral system; and corporate interest group representation (Lijphart 1994).

14 Here Lijphart is ‘trading’ representation, an intrinsic indicator of democratic performance, against extrinsic indicators of government performance. However, although the means of the measures for
continuous variable for consensus-majoritarian systems and re-runs the test, the results only receive rather partial confirmation (Lijphart 1994, 10). Powell finds that majoritarian systems have high executive stability and low(ish) participation, while consensus systems have low stability and high participation (Powell 1982, 63), with higher participation possibly leading to slightly less political violence (Powell 1982, 69). Huber and Powell find that PR systems achieve a ‘greater congruence between government and voters’ (Huber and Powell 1994, 310), because ‘proportionality is the strongest and most significant predictor of the distance from the median voter to the median party’ (Huber and Powell 1994, 323). Crepaz constructs a measure of ‘popular cabinet support’ to show that PR systems are much more ‘encompassing’ than plurality systems, and therefore more ‘consensual’ (Crepaz 1996, 91). Anderson and Guillory seek to demonstrate that, although ‘winners’ (those whose party is in government) are more satisfied in majoritarian systems and ‘losers’ are more satisfied in consensus systems, the gap between the satisfaction levels of winners and losers is smaller the more consensual the system (Anderson and Guillory 1997, 75).

Interestingly, no recent inquiry follows Powell in investigating the role of political party systems in linking and mediating constitutional design and democratic performance (Powell 1982, 2). Powell looks at the effects of multiparty versus two-party government, but also at the linkages between parties and interest groups, and at the impact of extremist parties. The failure to pursue this line of inquiry is regrettable, since, as Powell warns, ‘the “structural” implications of the constitutional design are only part of the story’ (Powell 1989, 124). Take the record of presidential systems. It is argued that these are most fragile when combined with multipartism, with all cases of multiparty presidentialism finally breaking down (Mainwaring 1993). But the problem may be more with the multipartism than with the presidentialism, especially in the ‘third world,’ where, irrespective of the type of executive-legislative relations, none of the multiparty cases evolved as a continuous democracy (Zelaznik 1998).

The emphasis on the party system provides a salutary warning against simplistic assumptions about the mechanical effects of constitutional design, and of electoral systems in particular. In this connection, the construction of the distinction between consensus and majoritarian systems sometimes moves beyond academic inquiry to

growth, inflation and unemployment are higher for PR systems than plurality systems, the difference is only substantial for unemployment, and none of the differences are statistically significant.

15 The only variables to show strong and statistically significant results are women’s representation, family policy and the Dahl Index. These are all ‘representation’ variables, and Liphart admits that the Dahl Index is biased towards PR-consensus systems (Lijphart 1994, 7).

16 This allows him to make more complex statements of the kind that ‘multiparty fractionalization is associated with higher voting turnout (because of strong linkages), with less rioting, and with only slightly more unstable executives, as long as extremism is avoided’ (Powell 1982, 109). It also allows him to investigate ‘environmental’ and constitutional effects simultaneously, concluding, for example, that richer countries have higher voting turnouts because their party systems ‘are more likely to be firmly linked to citizens’ social characteristics, such as religion, ethnicity and class’ (Powell 1982, 121).

17 Of the fifty-nine ‘third world’ cases from Mainwaring’s dataset, none of the twenty-seven multiparty systems evolved as a continuous democracy in the period 1967 to 1992, but eight two-party (or two and one half party) systems did so, out of a total of thirty-two (Zelaznik 1998). Similarly, of the nineteen ‘third world’ countries in Stepan and Skach’s dataset of stable democracies, 1979-1989, there are only two cases with more than 2.5 parties, namely (presidential) Venezuela (2.6) and (parliamentary) Papua New Guinea (4.0) (Zelaznik 1998).
political project, with ‘majoritarian’ itself taking on pejorative overtones. Thus, Lijphart’s ‘majoritarian’ (1984) becomes the ‘majoritarian constitution’ (Powell 1989, 113), and eventually the ‘majority control vision’ (Huber and Powell 1994, 291), while consensus system becomes the anodyne ‘proportionate influence vision’ (Huber and Powell 1994, 291). Yet all democratic constitutionalism sets ‘limits on majority decisions’ (Elster 1993, 2), whether substantive or procedural, and constrains the scope of majority action. And in all democratic systems, majority powers are limited in order ‘to guarantee that it will remain a majority which can learn’ with a ‘procedural and discussion-stimulating sort of common framework’ (Holmes 1993, 238-40). At the same time majorities tend to have to be ‘made,’ whether by coalitions in so-called consensus systems, or by electoral rules that translate electoral pluralities into legislative majorities in so-called majoritarian systems.\(^18\)

**Problems of Research Design**

The results of these inquiries into the effects of constitutional design on democratic performance are all closely influenced by case selection. Thus, the results of the inquiries into the effects of executive-legislative relations on regime endurance vary according to their geographical scope, time frame and categories to be included or excluded. These categories are constructed, in turn, according to different definitions of democracy, endurance (including stability and instability) and even government type (two, three or five types) (compare Huntington 1991, Shugart and Carey 1992, Stepan and Skach 1993, Mainwaring and Shugart 1997). Yet there is some virtue in the diversity of the datasets. The problem of the PR-plurality inquiries, on the contrary, is that they are so often limited to the same set of (some twelve to twenty) ‘industrial democracies.’ A further problem is that the PR cases tend all to be situated within Western Europe (typically, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden), with even the southern European cases of Greece, Spain and Portugal usually excluded (Lardaret 1993, 160).\(^19\) This may allow results to be biased by a preponderance of ‘very small societies,’ that, in the Scandinavian examples, are ‘nearly homogeneous’ (Quade 1993, 167), while the whole set has enjoyed the peculiar historical advantages of the Marshall Plan and US-NATO military protection. This concatenation of circumstances leads Quade to dismiss Lijphart’s thesis as ‘purely speculative’ (Quade 1993, 169).

For these reasons Lijphart himself recognizes that it is ‘urgent to extend comparative analysis of democratic systems to long-term democracies that are non-European, non-Western, and non-wealthy,’ to ascertain whether there are ‘the same patterns in the complete set of democracies, old and new, that we have already found among the old democracies’ (Lijphart 1994, 13).\(^20\) But this would inevitably entail an extension of the PR-plurality comparison into the set of presidential democracies, a move that has proved conceptually difficult. Lijphart has argued that presidentialism has ‘majoritarian’ effects on the party system and type of executive but ‘consensual’

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\(^18\) For this reason amongst others, Shugart prefers the use of ‘pluralitarian’ to ‘majoritarian’ (Shugart, forthcoming).

\(^19\) Powell’s classifications are idiosyncratic. He first classified both West Germany and Ireland as majoritarian, on the grounds that they have less than five representatives per district and other ‘majoritarian features’ (Powell 1982, 60). He later added them to a ‘mixed’ category that first included Greece and Spain (Powell 1989, 112), and later France and Sweden (Huber and Powell 1994, 308).

\(^20\) These sentiments are echoed by Anderson and Guillory (1997, 79).
effects on executive-legislative relations (Lijphart 1993, 148). But this assumes that presidentialism has plurality rules and ‘fosters a two-party system’ (Lijphart 1993, 148), whereas the great majority of presidential systems are PR and multiparty (Foweraker 1998). In fact, presidentialism can only be interpreted as ‘consistent with majoritarian democracy’ if it assumes the US characteristics of ‘two-party system, one party cabinets and a most dominant executive compared to the legislature’ (Crepaz 1996, 91). As Lijphart has recognized (Lijphart 1993, 150), presidential-PR systems have very different characteristics, that cannot be described as ‘majoritarian’ without depriving the term of any remaining coherence (Foweraker 1998). It will therefore be best to judge the effects of plurality and PR systems on their own terms, and irrespective of executive-legislative relations.

The potential bias of case selection may be compounded by (narrowly) selective criteria of comparison of the cases. This is especially true of comparisons between PR and plurality systems that are grounded in their degrees of representativeness. For the whole constitutional purpose of PR systems is to deliver more representation in the sense of greater proportionality, and to seek to demonstrate their superiority on these grounds alone is to invite tautology. Lijphart recognizes this point in some degree when observing that ‘the superior record of consensus democracy with regard to minority representation and democratic quality is not surprising because consensus democracy may be said to be designed so as to achieve more accurate representation of interests’ (Lijphart 1994, 11). But he seems unaware that ‘democratic quality’ is not necessarily equivalent to ‘more accurate representation’ alone. Here and elsewhere Lijphart claims that PR systems are superior because they achieve ‘better representation’ (Lijphart 1994, 8). But democratic constitutions should embody and seek to deliver a greater range of liberal democratic values, whatever the importance of representation itself.21

This sort of tautological reasoning infects all comparisons of PR-plurality systems in some degree. Powell concludes that consensual constitutional designs increase citizen control through the ‘representative delegate’ model (an index of party choice and ‘effective representation’) (Powell 1989, 123-4). Huber and Powell find that their ‘proportionate influence’ systems achieve ‘greater congruence between government and voters’ (Huber and Powell 1994, 310). Crepaz demonstrates that PR systems are more ‘encompassing’ than plurality systems (Crepaz 1996, 91).22 Anderson and

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21 This is a methodological statement about the proper grounds of comparison of democratic constitutional designs. It should not be confused with a philosophical inquiry into what makes a ‘fair’ or ‘just’ system of representation, or with a ‘republican’ inquiry into what principles of representation may best achieve the ‘common good’ or ‘general welfare’ (Quade 1993, 166). The most polemical critique of the ‘PR’ position asserts that democratic electoral process is about making democratic government, not about ‘recreating’ societal ‘interests’ within the legislature. ‘An election is not a poll aimed at giving the most accurate representation of all the various opinions or interests at play in a given society. Were that the case…the most democratic assembly would be one where each member represented a sharply defined interest or particular ideological nuance. Such an assembly would represent an absurd caricature of democratic government’ (Lardaret 1993, 161).

22 The Crepaz argument is especially revealing in this regard. He sets out to demonstrate that PR systems are more encompassing by his measure of ‘popular cabinet support,’ and, as a consequence, achieve better government performance, according to the usual economic measures. ‘The wider popular cabinet support, the less coalition governments can afford to push for narrow, group-specific redistributive policies….the larger the amount of society which is encompassed by governing parties, the more dysfunctional it becomes to “unload” the externalities of policy-making on particular groups.
Guillory discover a smaller gap between the satisfaction of ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ in consensual systems (Anderson and Guillory 1997, 75). In each case the relationship is ‘found’ by definition, and so the sophistication of the method is only matched by the triviality of the result.

**Constitutional Design and Research Design**

This brief review of the field is sufficient to suggest the ground-rules for an inquiry into the relationship between constitutional design and democratic performance. The first step is to define the performance indicator(s), or ‘dependent variable(s)’, taking care not to mix extrinsic (government) and intrinsic (democratic) measures of performance. This inquiry will focus on intrinsic measures of the quality of democracy, defined as the delivery of liberal democratic values. The second step is to employ a wide range of such values, not just one (e.g. representation) or another (e.g. participation), in order to avoid tautological traps and investigate the possible trade-offs across distinct democratic values. This inquiry sets out to measure accountability and constraint, as well as representation and participation, and also includes a range of rights measures (civil rights, political rights, property rights, minority rights). The third step is to compare a broad range of cases, including ‘non-European, non-Western, and non-wealthy’ cases (Lijphart 1994, 13), to mitigate the biases of geography and development. Finally, the effects of constitutional design should be gauged across the full set of cases, including the differential effects of PR and plurality systems across both presidential and parliamentary regimes, and those of parliamentary and presidential regimes across PR and plurality systems.

The main objective is to assemble sufficient evidence, across a sufficiently wide and diverse set of cases, to answer some of the key questions about the main determinants of democratic performance, both non-constitutional and constitutional. Do the rich democracies that appear so ‘impregnable’ (Przeworski et al. 1996, 41) also perform better than poor democracies? Similarly, if parliamentary regimes are so much more ‘durable’ than presidential ones (Przeworski et al. 1996, 46) do they too perform better? And what is the main determinant of democratic performance? Is it economics (e.g. rich versus poor), culture (e.g. modern versus traditional), or time (long established versus recent democracies)? Or is it indeed constitutional design, and, if so, is the key feature executive-legislative relations, electoral system or federal-unitary organization? Finally, what is the relative strength of non-constitutional and constitutional determinants of performance?24

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23 It is possible to mitigate these biases, but not eliminate them entirely. However the data set is constructed, there will still be a cluster of stable, parliamentary regimes in developed Western Europe and a cluster of less stable presidential regimes in underdeveloped Latin America. By taking such ‘environmental’ factors into account, Powell discovered that the apparent superiority of parliamentary-PR systems in reducing political violence was an artefact of the concentration of these systems in more prosperous countries (Powell 1982, 69).

24 The main methodological assumption, consistent with most studies in the field, is that economics, culture, time and constitutional design will all affect democratic performance in some degree. Hence, it seems legitimate to use the shorthand of ‘determinants’ of democratic performance. But – at this early stage - the inquiry itself does not seek to establish causality or test for causal relationships. More modestly it uses simple descriptive statistics to map the patterns of association between the different ‘determinants’ and performance outcomes. Nonetheless, these patterns are clear enough to stimulate strong inferences about the relationships at work.
The evidence has been assembled and collated in a database of democratic performance, organized according to liberal democratic values. These values are drawn from mainstream traditions of liberal democratic theory. The normative inquiry leads to the unexceptional claim that liberal democracy is founded upon the two key principles of liberty and equality that must be upheld by the rule of law and the sovereignty of the people. But the model of democratic performance assumes that these two principles are achieved in practice through the operation of eight core values, and that these values comprise two main axes that combine the individual experience of democracy (rule of law) with the institutional efficacy of democratic government (sovereignty of the people). The first axis contains the legal values of civil rights, property rights, political rights, and minority rights. These rights and the rule of law are important guarantees of individual freedoms and protections, and so help to deliver the substance of democracy to the citizenry at large. The second axis contains the institutional values of accountability, representation, constraint and participation. These are the values that protect the rule of law by making government accountable to the people.

The database contains twenty-one measures (two, three or, at most four per value) for forty cases from 1970, or from the first-year-democratic to the present (1998). Since scores do not exist for each variable for each year, and since many democracies are more recent than 1970 (these are two distinct statements), there are 6,314 observations out of a possible total of 16,779. The variables (Appendix B) were chosen to provide high quality time-series measures that are sensitive (sufficient variation), diverse (in sources and substance) and differentiated (ordinal and interval, single and aggregate). The cases (Appendix B) were chosen, first, for data availability over time, and, second, to provide proper geographical coverage across cognate clusters of cases. The principles of selection of both variables and cases are explained in more detail in the appendix.

With the database complete, six dichotomous categories were established and dummy variables introduced to differentiate the cases. The six categories were economics, with the cases split between democracies below and above a threshold of US$6,000 per capita income; culture, or European and European settler democracies and all others; time, or established (pre-1970) and new (1970-present) democracies; executive-legislative relations, or parliamentary and presidential democracies; electoral system, or PR and plurality democracies; and federal and unitary democracies. The composition of the categories is further explained in Appendix C. Finally, comparison of means tables were constructed for all the measures across each of the six categories to explore their performance patterns (Appendix D).

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25 In other words, these core values are established on a priori grounds, and are not derived from citizen preferences. This methodological choice is justified by our very incomplete knowledge of such preferences across the globe, and by our lack of confidence in the comparative application of the existing survey data on these preferences. Where such data is applied it often addresses the relationship between citizen preferences and specific policy outputs, not democratic performance (e.g. Huber and Powell 1994). Where the data addresses democratic performance, the use of the comparative method is flawed (e.g. Rose and Shin 1997).

26 We provide a full account of this inquiry in a previous paper, ‘Comparative Democratic Performance I: Modeling the Measures.’

27 Seymour Martin Lipset used the same statistical measure for analogous purposes in his famous essay on ‘Economic Development and Democracy’ (Lipset 1960, 45-76). He looked at the association
Preliminary Research Results

The comparison of means tables (Appendix D) reveal clear and consistent patterns of association in all of their dimensions. These patterns are summarized in Table 1 (below). Taking the non-constitutional categories first, it is immediately evident that they act more powerfully to distinguish the cases than the constitutional categories. Just how much more is suggested by the forty-eight significant results within non-constitutional as compared to the thirty-two such results within constitutional categories. Thus, economics, time and culture all appear to affect democratic performance more strongly than constitutional design. One possible lesson is that studies of the impact of constitutional design on democratic performance should remain sensitive to the broader economic and cultural context.

Table 1: Summary of Comparison of Means by Dichotomous Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. indicators</th>
<th>Parliamentary (A) – Presidential (B)</th>
<th>PR (A) – Plurality (B)</th>
<th>Unitary (A) – Federal (B)</th>
<th>Old (A)-New (B)</th>
<th>GDP &gt; $6000 (A) – GDP &lt; $6000 (B)</th>
<th>European (A) – Other (B)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A higher mean</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 (I=5, R=8)</td>
<td>5 (I=2, R=3)</td>
<td>2 (I=1, R=1)</td>
<td>14 (I=5, R=9)</td>
<td>15 (I=6, R=9)</td>
<td>12 (I=4, R=8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A higher mean and signif.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B higher mean</td>
<td>1 (I=1, R=0)</td>
<td>5 (I=2, R=3)</td>
<td>6 (I=3, R=3)</td>
<td>1 (I=1, R=0)</td>
<td>1 (I=1, R=0)</td>
<td>2 (I=2, R=0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B higher mean and signif.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5 (I=2, R=3)</td>
<td>6 (I=3, R=3)</td>
<td>1 (I=1, R=0)</td>
<td>1 (I=1, R=0)</td>
<td>2 (I=2, R=0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staying with the non-constitutional categories, it appears that rich democracies perform better than poor (fifteen significant results to one), old better than new (fourteen significant results to one), and European better than Other (twelve significant results to two). Thus, economics has a slightly stronger association with democratic performance than either culture or time. Yet it is probable that these three categories of old, rich and European all express a more encompassing process, like world capitalist history (sic). Prima facie, the European (original), established and industrially developed democracies are very different from all the others.

28 Przeworski et al. (1996) suggest that rich democracies are more resilient, presumably because they are rich. They may also be more resilient because they perform better qua democracies.
In this connection, it emerges that the big ‘gap’ between the performance of rich and poor, European and non-European, established and new democracies is created by the rights measures far more than by the institutional measures. The comparisons show forty-one significant results of superior performance by rich, old and European democracies, of which twenty-six relate to rights measures and just fifteen to institutional measures. This suggests that the ‘third wave’ democracies of the ‘third world’ (and former ‘second world’) meet the institutional requirements of liberal democracy more completely that the rights requirements.

These results may correspond to the observed ‘ring-fencing’ of electoral politics in new and ‘third world’ democracies in order to insure that governments are indeed ‘decided by a universalistic process of fairly counting each vote as one’ (O’Donnell 1997, 49). Elections may escape the contamination of clientelism and the ‘rule of informal rules’ through the measure of horizontal accountability implicit in political party competition, driven by the requirements of international legitimation and finance. Hence, citizens of these democracies may be able to choose their governments through (relatively) free and fair elections, with freedom of opinion, movement and association, even while their civil rights of personal integrity and equality before the law are infringed or ignored. This goes some way to explain the nature of the gap ‘between formal rights and actual rights, between commitments to treat citizens as free and equal and practices which do neither sufficiently’ (Held 1992, 20).

The constitutional categories also appear to affect democratic performance, but only the presidential-parliamentary category distinguishes the cases as strongly as the non-constitutional categories. Here the parliamentary democracies clearly outperform the presidential ones (by thirteen significant results to one). The one exception is provided by the disproportionality variable, where presidential regimes score higher, if only just. Although the usual caveats about the geographical distribution of the cases still apply, these results do tend to endorse the large literature that defends the intrinsic superiority of parliamentary systems (see section on Constitutional Determinations of Democratic Performance, above). The overall differentiating effect of the federal-unitary category, on the other hand, is much weaker (with only eight significant results in total), but federal systems do seem to outperform unitary ones on both institutional and rights measures (by three to one on both dimensions).

The results of the comparison of the PR and plurality regimes, on the other hand, are more complex, and possibly more interesting. For it is patent that PR regimes perform better on some values and plurality regimes better on others. In some degree, their respective performance corresponds to the predictions of theory, and confirms the results of previous studies. Thus, focussing only on the significant results, PR regimes outperform plurality ones on representation (so confirming Lijphart), while plurality regimes outperform PR ones on accountability (confirming Powell, and Huber and Powell). PR regimes also perform better on political rights, and on the minority rights of women, whereas plurality regimes perform better on civil rights, property rights, one measure of constraint, and political rights for ethnic minorities (a result that is

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29 These results may be ‘loaded’ in some degree by the fact that there are twelve rights measures but only nine institutional measures.
30 These issues are explored in greater detail in Foweraker, ‘Democratization in Latin America’ in (eds) Kate Nash and Alan Scott Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology (forthcoming).
counter-intuitive). Furthermore, each regime type outperforms the other by the same overall measure of five significant results and nine superior scores in total. Thus, quite contrary to Lijphart’s assertion of the superiority of PR over plurality with ‘no trade-off’ across the systems (Lijphart 1994, 8), there is in fact a *multiple and finely balanced trade-off* between the advantages of PR and plurality systems.
### Appendix A: Quantitative analyses of democratic stability according to type of executive-legislative relations (Zelaznik 1998).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Cases considered</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Stable democracies</th>
<th>Unstable democracies</th>
<th>Rate of democratic survival</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huntington</td>
<td>All countries</td>
<td>1900-1939</td>
<td>3 (16.7%) 13 (72.2%) 2 (11.1%)</td>
<td>2 (14.3%) 11 (78.6%) 1 (7.1%)</td>
<td>60.0% 54.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shugart and Carey</td>
<td>Third world</td>
<td>20th century</td>
<td>11 (47.8%) 9 (39.1%) 3 (13.0%)</td>
<td>12 (41.4%) 13 (44.8%) 4 (13.8%)</td>
<td>47.8% 40.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shugart and Carey</td>
<td>All countries</td>
<td>20th century</td>
<td>12 (25.0%) 27 (56.3%) 9 (18.8%)</td>
<td>12 (30.8%) 21 (53.8%) 6 (15.4%)</td>
<td>50.0% 56.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainwaring</td>
<td>All countries</td>
<td>1945-1992</td>
<td>4 (12.9%) 24 (77.4%) 3 (9.7%)</td>
<td>27 (52.9%) 20 (39.2%) 4 (7.8%)</td>
<td>12.9% 54.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riggs</td>
<td>Third world</td>
<td>1920-1985</td>
<td>0 (100%)</td>
<td>33 (71.7%) 13 (28.3%)</td>
<td>0.0% 69.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainwaring and</td>
<td>Third World</td>
<td>1945-1992</td>
<td>3 (37.5%) 5 (62.5%) 0</td>
<td>3 (60.0%) 1 (20.0%) 1 (20.0%)</td>
<td>50.0% 83.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepan and Skach</td>
<td>Newly independent</td>
<td>1980-1989</td>
<td>0 (100%)</td>
<td>36 (55.4%) 26 (40.0%) 3 (4.6%)</td>
<td>0.0% 36.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepan and Skach</td>
<td>Non-OECD</td>
<td>1973-1989</td>
<td>5 (22.7%) 17 (77.3%) 0</td>
<td>20 (64.5%) 11 (35.5%) 0</td>
<td>20.0% 61.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stepan and Skach</td>
<td>All countries</td>
<td>1979-1989</td>
<td>5 (11.6%) 34 (79.1%) 4 (9.3%)</td>
<td>--- --- ---</td>
<td>--- ---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Huntington (1991); Mainwaring (1993); Mainwaring and Shugart (1994); Riggs (1993); Shugart and Carey (1992); Stepan and Skach (1994).

1- Presidential systems for Huntington; hybrid, and semi-presidential systems for Mainwaring, and Mainwaring and Shugart; premier-presidential, president-parliamentary, and assembly-independent systems for Shugart and Carey; semi-presidential, and mixed systems for Stepan and Skach.

2- Stable democracies are those countries democratized during the first wave that remained democratic at least until 1939; unstable cases are those that broke down during the first reverse wave, up to 1939.

3- Stable democracies are those that hold at least two democratic elections without breaking down; unstable democracies are those that held at least two consecutive elections before breaking down.

4- Stable democracies are those that were democratic for at least 25 continuous years and did not break down; unstable democracies are those that broke down at some point, excluding those cases where democratic institutions broke down within five years of independence.

5- Stable democracies are those that were continuously democratic between 1979 and 1989.

6- Stable democracies are those that were continuously democratic between 1980 and 1989.

7- The countries included are those that became independent between 1944 and 1979.

8- Stable democracies are those that were continuously democratic for any ten consecutive years; unstable democracies are those that were democratic for at least 1 but less than 10 consecutive years.

9- Stable democracies are those that were continuously democratic between 1979 and 1989.
Appendix B: VARIABLES & CASES

VARIABLES

Variables were chosen according to their geographical and temporal range, their affinity with the values to be measured, and their empirical quality. The database was designed for both balance and texture, with an even distribution of measures to values, a mixture of ordinal and interval level indicators, and a variety of scale ranges.

Accountability

ELECTION - executive recruitment competition, Polity III (Jaggers and Gurr 1995)
GOVTYPE - civilian versus military government, Binghampton (Cingranelli and Richards 1998)
MILITARY – military spending as % of total central government spending (IMF 1997)

Excluded: Banks (1997) Type of Regime and Effective Executive (Selection), Gasiorowski regime change data (1996), political rights (Freedom House 1997)

Representation

DISPROP – electoral disproportionality, Gallagher’s least-squares (Ersson 1998, Zelaznik 1999)
PARSEATS – size of legislature/number seats largest party (Banks 1998)

Excluded: measures of effective number of parties, % votes for largest party (International IDEA 1997)

Constraint

EXECONST – executive constraints, Polity III (Jaggers and Gurr 1995)
LOCALTAX - local and state government tax revenue as % central tax revenue (IMF 1997)

Excluded: Polity III Centralization of State Authority (Jaggers and Gurr 1995)

Participation

LEGIVOTE – legislative votes as % voting age population (International IDEA 1997)
PRESVOTE – presidential vote as % voting age population (International IDEA 1997)

Excluded: electoral turnout as % registered voters (Banks 1997), electoral turnout as % total population (Vanhanen 1997), social movement events data (ILO 1990)

Political Rights

COMPETE – competitiveness of participation, Polity III (Jaggers and Gurr 1995)
UNION – trade union rights, Binghampton (Cingranelli and Richards 1998)
Constitutional Design

CENSOR – government media censorship, Binghampton (Cingranelli and Richards 1998)


Civil Rights

CIVIL – Amnesty International human rights (Poe and Tate 1994, Purdue University 1998)
UNEQUAL – income inequality, Gini coefficient (Deininger and Squire 1996)
PRISON – prisoners per 100,000 population (Walmsley 1996)

*Excluded*: State Department human rights (Poe and Tate 1994), Binghampton civil rights indicators (Cingranelli and Richards 1998), alternative income inequality measures (Deininger and Squire 1996), civil liberties (Freedom House 1997)

Property Rights

ECONFREE – index of economic freedom, Heritage Foundation (Johnson et al 1998)
PROPERTY – risk of expropriation, Political Risk Services (Knack and Keefer 1995)

*Excluded*: Transparency International corruption perception index (Lambsdorff 1998), Political Risk Services corruption and government repudiation of contracts (Knack and Keefer 1995), government share of GDP (Lane, McKay and Newton 1997)

Minority Rights

WOMENREP - % women in lower house of legislature (Inter-Parliamentary Union 1995)
EQUAL – women’s equal rights, Binghampton (Cingranelli and Richards 1998)
DISCRIM – political discrimination, Minorities at Risk (Haxton and Gurr 1997)
RESTRICT – cultural restrictions, Minorities at Risk (Haxton and Gurr 1997)

*Excluded*: Binghampton women’s political rights (Cingranelli and Richard 1998), political restrictions and index of political disadvantages, Minorities at Risk (Haxton and Gurr 1997)

CASES

Cases were selected on both methodological and practical grounds. The initial population was the 118 countries described as either ‘liberal’ or ‘electoral’ democracies by Diamond (1997), and as reaching a minimum threshold of procedural democracy by Freedom House standards. Countries with less than 1.5 million inhabitants were eliminated (leaving 82 cases), as were countries formed or reformed as nation-states since 1989, including both Germany and the Czech Republic (leaving 67 cases). Countries were also eliminated if they did not appear in either the Minorities at Risk database (Haxton and Gurr 1997) or the Binghampton Human Rights database or the Political Risk Services database on property rights (Knack and
Keefer 1995) - leaving 56 cases of which 17 were ‘established’ democracies. Further countries were eliminated in order to balance the number of ‘established’ and ‘new’ democracies, and to achieve an appropriate geographical spread. This left 40 countries, distributed into selected clusters on historical, geographical, economic or institutional grounds. Clusters such as the three former Central American dictatorships (Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua) were included, whereas cases like Papua New Guinea or Mali were excluded.

The database covers the years 1970 to 1998, and is designed to capture the ‘third wave.’ The database was reconfigured for this paper to include data from the first-year-democratic of each case. For example, the Argentina data begins in 1983. First-year-democratic was decided according to the regime classifications of Alvarez, Cheibub, Limongi and Przeworski (1996), and for six of the seven remaining cases (Albania, Romania, Ghana, Malawi, South Africa and Taiwan) by the year of the first post-authoritarian legislative elections according to International IDEA (1997). The first-year-democratic of Sri Lanka is 1983 according to Gasiorowski (1996).

### OLD (17)

**USA, Canada, Japan**
- highly developed capitalist states

**Costa Rica, Venezuela, Colombia**
- Latin America’s ‘old’ democracies

**UK, France, Italy**
- majoritarian/intermediate Lijphart (1984, 219)
- similar EU position
- similar size/population/GDP

**Denmark, Netherlands, Switzerland**
- consensual Lijphart (1984, 219)
- similar size/population/GDP

### NEW (23)

**Chile, Argentina, Brazil**
- Southern Cone dictatorships

**El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala**
- Central American cases

**Poland, Hungary**
- economically advanced
- Central European
- not Ottoman Empire (Austro-Hungarian)

**Bulgaria, Romania, Albania**
- less economically advanced
- Eastern Europe
- Ottoman Empire

**Spain, Portugal, Greece**
- southern European dictatorships

**Australia, New Zealand, India, Sri Lanka**
- Asia/Oceania
- British colonial heritage

**South Korea, Philippines, Taiwan**
- east, south-east Asian

**Pakistan, Bangladesh, Turkey**
- Islamic influence

**South Africa, Malawi, Ghana**
- British colonial experience
Appendix C: DICHOTOMOUS DUMMY VARIABLES

Parliamentary-Presidential

This variable is primarily based on the classifications of Alvarez et al (1996). Their ‘mixed’ cases were sorted as follows: Portugal (parliamentary), Poland (presidential), France (presidential). Cases not covered by Alvarez et al were classified as follows: Albania (parliamentary), Romania (presidential), Ghana (parliamentary), Malawi (presidential), South Africa (presidential), Taiwan (parliamentary), Sri Lanka (presidential).

Proportional Representation-Plurality

This variable follows the classification of LeDuc, Niemi and Norris (1996, 13-15) for the mid-1990s, and, for missing cases, of International IDEA (1997). Where these sources were insufficient or at odds, the cases were classified as follows: Guatemala (plurality), Venezuela (PR), Chile (PR), Hungary (plurality), Italy (PR), Albania (plurality), Taiwan (plurality), Japan (plurality), New Zealand (plurality).

Federal-Unitary

This variable was classified using the Polity III indicator Centralization of State Authority (Jaggers and Gurr 1995). The ‘mixed’ cases were categorised as follows: Argentina (federal), Spain (unitary).

New Democracy-Old Democracy

Countries reaching a minimum threshold of procedural democracy before and including 1970 are ‘old’ democracies; those doing so after 1970 are ‘new.’ The only exception is Sri Lanka, which only reaches this threshold in 1983, but is still classified as ‘old.’

GDP/capita>US$6000 - GDP/capita<US$6000

This is the threshold of secure democracy set by Przeworski et al (1996). The variable is based on 1992 GDP/capita in constant US dollars (chain index, 1985IP) from the Penn World Tables Mark 5.6. If no data is available for 1992, the first available previous year is used. Albania, not included in the Penn tables, is classified as GDP/capita<$6000 according to IMF data.

European-Other

This variable corresponds to broad regional cultural patterns. Countries classified as European are either in Europe or were European settler colonies (USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Israel). The countries in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and the case of Turkey, are categorised as Other.
## Appendix D: MEANS TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Parliamentary/ Presidential Mean</th>
<th>PR/ Plurality Mean</th>
<th>Unitary/ Federal Mean</th>
</tr>
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<td>federal 0.85</td>
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F statistic * p<0.05 ** p<0.01
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<tr>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>New/ Old</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>GDP/capita &gt;/≤ $6000</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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F statistic * p<0.05 ** p<0.01
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