Patterns of Democracy?
Counterevidence from Nineteen Post-Communist Countries

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Abstract

In Patterns of Democracy, Arend Lijphart not only contends that democratic institutions cluster in two distinct forms, but also that consensus democracies are ‘kindler, gentler’ types of institutional settings than majoritarian arrangements (Lijphart 1999). Although Lijphart’s analysis shows strong empirical support for his claims, his framework was never applied outside stable democracies. The present article covers that gap by replicating Lijphart’s analysis in the post-communist context and evaluates Lijphart’s theory in two separate ways. First, if his posited split of democracies into two blocs appears in the post-communist world. Second if post-communist states with more ‘consensus-oriented’ attributes actually enjoy greater political rights and civil liberties.

By contrast with established democracies, Lijphart’s two dimensional map of democracy does not appear in the context of post-communist countries. In other words, there is no regular pattern of correlations between indicators of consensus-majoritarian democracy among post-communist countries. Nevertheless, multivariate empirical verification reveals that some elements included in the consensus democracy framework should be introduced in new constitutions, but perhaps not as the monolithic cluster of basic laws of constitutions like Lijphart originally suggested. Hence this study casts a shadow on the relevance of the majoritarian versus consensus classification of democratic regimes.
To compare or not to compare Latin America and Southern Europe’s experience of democratic transition to Eastern and Central Europe’s own experience has been at the center of a vigorous polemic in comparative politics since the beginning of the nineties (Schmitter & Karl, 1994; Bunce, 1994; Karl & Schmitter, 1995; Bunce 1995; Bunce, 2000). While it is legitimate to question the generalizability of theoretical frameworks crafted to fit the rather uniform experience of Latin America and Southern Europe, it is undeniable that comparison with previous waves of democratization is a mandatory step in theorizing about post-communist transitions and consolidation. However, by going a step further and using the experience of well-established democracies to offer advice to ‘constitutional engineers’, Arend Lijphart’s (1999) effort in *Patterns of Democracy* may be overstretched, both empirically and theoretically. It is in this perspective that I reassess the relevance of the prescriptions made by Arend Lijphart for ‘constitutional engineers’ in democratizing states by investigating his claims within the post-communist context.

In *Patterns of Democracy*, Lijphart contends that democracies cluster in two distinct forms: consensus and majoritarian. What is more, he argues that consensus democracies are ‘kinder, gentler’ forms of institutional settings than majoritarian arrangements. Although Lijphart’s analysis shows strong empirical support for his claims, his framework was never applied outside his sample of thirty-six mature democracies. For these reasons, the present study proposes to evaluate how well Lijphart’s two-dimensional conception of democracy applies to post-communist countries in two steps. First, I demonstrate that the clustering of institutions Lijphart observes in advanced industrial democracies does not exist in the post-communist context. Second, I revisit his assertion that consensus democracy makes a difference with several indicators of both quality and ‘gentleness’ of democracy in nineteen post-communist countries. Upon empirical verification, some institutional features associated with democratic quality, such as party systems, cabinet types, electoral methods, do not seem to offer much light on the variation in democratic outcomes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, at least not in the way Lijphart anticipated. On the contrary, these findings render a reevaluation of Lijphart’s prescriptions to newly democratic countries necessary.
That is, whether consensus democracy arrangements should be introduced in bloc as basic laws of constitutions given the small difference these characteristics really make in quality of democracy.

Post-Communist Consensus and Majoritarian Systems

Arend Lijphart’s main finding in Patterns of Democracy is what he calls a two-dimensional map of democracy. Within a sample of thirty-six mature democracies he demonstrated a clustering of ten variables in two blocs: a joint-power dimension and a divided power dimension. In the first dimension (executives–parties) we find the effective number of parties, cabinet making style, executive dominance, electoral methods and interest group pluralism all closely correlated with one another. The same clustering also occurs in the second dimension (federal–unitary) where the degree of government centralization, the number of legislative chambers and their relative power, constitutional rigidity, judicial review and central bank independence, also are strongly interrelated.

After having established the existence of these two distinct dimensions, Lijphart then proceeds to demonstrate that states that have a democracy closer to the consensus type – proportional elections, multiple parties and balanced executives–legislative relations – achieve better results in terms of civil and political rights, or are gentler towards their populations, than majoritarian democracies. Testing this hypothesis on the same thirty-six mature democracies, Lijphart attempts to extend his argument to new democracies, claiming that certain constitutional choices of the consensus-kind are desirable arrangements in most cases. It is from this perspective that Lijphart argues that some of these prescriptions should be included in new constitutions being crafted after a transition from an authoritarian regime. In addition to these recommendations, he also seems to suggest that the inclusion of ‘consensus democracy’ provisions in new constitutions is an unproblematic voluntary practice, thus ignoring a now growing literature on process tracing (e.g. Easter, 1997).

Lijphart, for the purpose of his analysis in Patterns of Democracy, only includes mature democracies. Taking Freedom House ratings, he selected the countries qualified as “free” for about twenty years in the Freedom House Survey Team’s judgment, being
lenient on the inclusion of a few cases like India and Papua New Guinea as well as others. While his selection of cases makes sense since he looks at democracies that have been consolidated, it generates empirical selection problems by not allowing much variability on the dependent variable.\(^1\) Indeed, claims about what facilitates democratic quality are laid on shaky grounds when the cases where transition failed to yield a democratic outcome are excluded from the sample. In addition to this statistical bias, it is not always clear how the experience of firmly established Western democracies can help us comprehend the experience of transitional states. This is especially the case of the many regimes that are neither clearly authoritarian nor democratic, although it would be fair to say they are no longer in a transition stage. In light of the apparent crystallization of hybrid regimes like Russia, we see that consolidation and stability are not necessarily linked and may not require the same elements. For these reasons, testing Lijphart’s propositions on a different set of countries is the next logical step.

The nineteen countries included in this study are post-communist states that underwent democratic transitions between 1989 and 1993.\(^2\) Given rather similar initial conditions, these post-communist countries present an ideal testing environment for institutional design hypotheses: all had some years of communist repressive regimes in their recent history and every one of them needed serious economic reforms after the collapse of the USSR. While they share a common communist past, variability of outcome in both democracy and economic reform is large, even puzzling. Indeed, some countries have managed to become full-fledged western-type democracies while others have slipped into harsh dictatorial regimes. Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and the three Baltic republics, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are democracies, while Moldova and Romania are not far behind. By contrast, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and especially Russia show upsetting backwards trends in democratization paths: these states have seen their freedom rating decline since 1993-94. Although relevant cases, the established autocracies, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and

\(^1\) In this sample selection we find an important empirical problem; cases are selected by their value on the outcome variable, which biases estimates by reducing variability in outcomes. See Geddes (1990).

\(^2\) The countries included are Albania, Armenia, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Slovenia. Bosnia, Mongolia and Serbia & Montenegro were excluded due to a lack of data in most published sources.
Uzbekistan, were excluded from the final analysis. Not only do they have dictatorial and repressive regimes, but most of them did not go through transitional periods other than a leadership change after the demise of the USSR. And because of the absence of even a democratic facade, they only provide limited insight in evaluating the effects of institutional design on democratic quality or even consolidation.3

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Source: Freedom House Organization, average scores.

**The Executives-Parties Dimension**

The present study, by looking at new democracies, faces many procedural and empirical difficulties. The scarcity of available data outside the OECD is one of the chief reasons why many of Lijphart’s claims remain untested with newly democratic states, as

3 Many scholars like Horowitz & Browne (2001) argue against the inclusion of autocracies in a study about post-soviet political institutions. Indeed, it makes sense to exclude most Central Asian republics on the basis that they never even went through a phase of transition towards a more open rule after the collapse of the USSR, but simply a change in leadership. However this forced exclusion of cases constitutes an important limitation for institutional design hypotheses testing: which means that for the countries of Central Asia, this literature is unfortunately of very limited usefulness.
The first variable, effective number of parties, was calculated using the formula developed by Laakso and Taagepera, $N=1/\sum S_i^2$, where $S_i$ is the percentage of seats obtained by each parties (Markku & Taagepera, 1979). In total, this study comprises over 75 elections from 1989 up to March 2003. Since the range of elections from 1989-1991 to 2003 available for each country varies from one to five, we could foresee some problems with countries in which there was only one or two elections since the transition.

Indeed, there exists a possibility that some party systems might not be in their definite and most stable form, and that consequently hindsight will prove the present measures incorrect. However, by comparing the average difference from the mean of all elections combined with the mean of all first elections, I observed that the likelihood of substantial change in the effective number of parties from ten years to twenty years is not very high. While for some countries there is a considerable difference between the first election and the mean value of effective number of parties, for example in Latvia, Russia and the Ukraine, most states seem to show stable trends: such is also the case in Lijphart’s sample. Indeed, for the majority of the thirty-six democracies included in *Patterns of Democracy* there is little variation over time. What is more, although a party system can be quite mature, there could still be long term evolution trends towards greater or lesser multipartism, like in Belgium for instance.

The second variable included in this analysis is cabinet formation. More specifically, this measure captures the proportion of time where minimal winning and one-party governments were in power in a given country. Here again when looking at the types of cabinets that are usually formed, a more accurate and reliable measure requires more than just a few elections. Trends of cabinet formation estimated from only two governments are tentative at best, but unfortunately the only measures we have for most young post-communist democracies. A minimal winning cabinet is a winning cabinet in the sense that a party controls a majority of parliamentary seats, but is minimal in the sense that the cabinet does not include a party or group unnecessary to reach a

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4 In addition to these problems, it is also evident that the parameter estimates of any statistical procedure involving aggregate data in this non-stochastic sample will face degrees of freedom and collinearity problems.

majority. Oversized cabinets contain more parties than are necessary for majority support in the legislature. Last, minority or undersized cabinets are not supported by a parliamentary majority. Parliamentary systems range from 0 to 100 percent in minimal winning cabinets, while presidential cabinets range from 50 to 100 percent due to the nature of the executive. For presidential cabinets where the president appoints ministers regardless of parliament composition, the coding is of 100 percent.

The next variable used to differentiate consensus democracy from the majoritarian model measures executive dominance. Many features of a system can serve to evaluate the strength of the executive vis-à-vis the legislative. Arend Lijphart proposed a measure based on the durability of cabinets. However, Lijphart encountered difficulties accounting for presidential and semi-presidential regimes with this system of quantification. Indeed, “several important adjustments” were required for presidential systems since “cabinet duration gives a completely wrong impression of the degree of executive dominance” (pp. 116 & 134). As a result, the executive dominance values for the United States, Costa Rica, France, Columbia and Venezuela were “impressionistically” and “arbitrarily” (pp.134-135) attributed because the initial ministerial stability measures produced erroneous evaluations for those countries. By contrast with Lijphart’s sample mostly composed of parliamentary systems, the majority of polities included in this study are semi-presidential formations. Given the coding difficulties Lijphart encountered with presidential regimes, it is therefore justified to seek to increase validity and reliability by using a measure that can account more systematically for the differences between executives’ strength in presidential regimes.

The classifications of the strength of executive power are varied and contested in the literature (Duverger, 1980; Elgie, 1998; Frye, 1997; Hellman, 1996; Lee Kendall, 2000; Sartori, 1997; Shugart and Carey, 1992). Of the available schemes to quantify executive dominance, scholars who choose simple categorical classification of institutions (parliamentary, hybrid, or presidential) have been criticized for employing values that do not capture the extent of concentration of power and overlook the differences between the many possible hybrid arrangements (e.g., Mainwaring, 1993; Stepan and Skach, 1993). Therefore a measure based on constitutional provisions to the executive would prove more justified, that especially for the cases of semi-presidential
systems that constitute the majority of institutional arrangements in post-communist states.

The Polity dataset based on the works of Ted Robert Gurr, provides one such index with a scale ranging from (1) through (7) where (7) is executive parity or subordination. However the Polity IV index takes into account factors like informal influence and authority that may not be reflected at the constitutional level. For example, an executive coded at its most powerful includes instances where constitutional provisions are ignored or violated. Yet I do believe that crucial differences exist between an executive that is made strong by the provisions included in a constitution and an executive that chooses to ignore the rules of the game. Constitutions play a crucial role in channeling political activity and political struggles and in this understanding there exists a fundamental relationship between constitutional provisions and the actual conduct of politics (McGregor, 1996). By mixing measures of informal authority with institutional arrangements, Polity IV’s presidential strength variable is not very useful to determine the independent effect that institutional arrangements may have on instances where rules are violated. With the inclusion of occurrences where a single executive violates the rules, the variable then becomes an endogenous factor of democracy/autocracy, which explains the authors’ decision to incorporate strength of executive in their democracy index.

In order to avoid this type of problem later on, the most suitable measure to capture formal executive dominance was constructed by Joel Hellman and Joshua Tucker based on the framework developed by Matthew Shugart and John Carey (1992). Hellman and Tucker’s coding of presidents and of prime ministers integrates positions on package veto and partial veto (not for prime ministers), decrees, budgetary powers, referenda provisions, initiation of legislation, cabinet formation, cabinet dismissal, censure and dissolution of assembly, with slight improvements on the original Shugart and Carey coding scheme. In order to also capture relational power between presidents and prime ministers in semi-presidential arrangements, the values I use to encapsulate

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7 Joel Hellman and Joshua Tucker, National Council for Soviet and East European Research (NCSEER), Post Communist Election Project.
executive-legislative relations in this analysis is the difference between presidents and prime-minister’s scores. Values are negative where prime ministers are the most powerful players and positive where presidents hold more prerogatives. Contrary to Lijphart’s measure, this variable provides a systematic way of coding executives, while also offering a way to distinguish parliamentary from semi-presidential and presidential arrangements.

The next variable captures the differences between majority and plurality electoral methods versus proportional representation. For this variable I produced an index of disproportionality for all possible legislative elections based on the works of Michael Gallagher, aptly praised by Arend Lijphart (Gallagher, 1991). This measure takes into account the squared and summed differences between vote percentages and seat percentages for each party present in the legislative assembly. This total is divided by two, and finally, the square root is taken from this last value. In countries where the electoral methods are mixed, only one vote shares percentages can be taken into account. Understanding that when we have an MMP system, like Lijphart and most scholars do, I take the party list vote into account since it expresses more accurately the preferences of the electorate. Unlike Lijphart, I do not include presidential elections in the index of disproportionality. Since most countries in our study have presidents, including presidential elections would only blur the effects/distortions produced by electoral systems on legislative seat distribution.

The last distinction between Lijphart’s types of democracies in this dimension is interest group pluralism. Interest group systems vary in structure from majoritarian to consensus democracy. More specifically, in majoritarian democracies, interest group systems are more likely to be competitive and uncoordinated, whereas they are corporatist (coordinated and compromise-oriented) in consensus democracies (Lijphart, 1999, p.171). Based on Alan Siaroff’s (1998) measure of corporatism in eight points, Andrew Roberts (2004) reproduced an index similar to Arend Lijphart for several Eastern European countries that will be used in this paper. However due to difficulties in obtaining relevant data on labor politics, this measure is only available for a few countries of the sample.
The Federal-Unitary Dimension

The first variable in the federal-unitary dimension is the degree of federalism and decentralization. The index used is from (1) to (5), from centralized and unitary to decentralized and federal. The coding for this variable is the following: the first distinction is established according to the state’s constitution. Is the constitution explicit in establishing the system as unitary or federal? From that point, degrees of decentralization are accorded to the following items: provinces, regions with elected representatives versus appointed governors, the potency of subnational assemblies, province or regions with their own constitutions, province or regions granted with special or autonomous status. It is crucial to note the majority of states included in this study sit on small territorial units. Consequently, most have unitary forms of government and are also centralized. This sample contains only one federation, Russia but it is considered highly centralized in comparison with countries like Canada or the United States. There is thus very little variance in this variable.

The second variable in the federal-unitary dimension is the strength of bicameralism. The first distinction to be made is between the countries that have one versus two legislative chambers. Even if according to Georges Tsebelis and Jeannette Money two thirds of the legislative assemblies of the world are bicameral, most of the countries in this study are thus atypical since they have unicameral legislatures (Tsebelis & Money, 1997). Because there are many existing institutional variations on the theme of bicameral arrangements, an ordinal variable measuring the strength of bicameralism will be used. Symmetry and asymmetry refers to the difference in decision making powers between the two chambers. On the one hand the two chambers’ consent may be necessary to enact laws, while some systems might give dominance to one chamber. Similar to Lijphart, this variable is coded according to the following scheme: (1) is for unicameral systems, (2) for subordinated upper chambers and (3) for upper chambers that are not subordinated.8

The third variable included in this dimension is the degree of legal independence of Central Banks or CBI. The index presented is from the model developed in Cukierman et al. (1992 and 2002), based on the evaluation of sixteen characteristics of

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8 Data from Armingeon and Careja (2004).
central bank charters. The indicators pertain to the allocation of authority over monetary policy, procedures for resolution of conflict between CB and government, the relative importance of price stability in CB objectives as stated in the law, the seriousness of limitations on lending by the CB to the government, and procedures for the appointment and dismissal of the governor of the CB. In the present sample, the most independent central banks are in Poland, Armenia, Estonia and Lithuania, while the least independent banks are found in Latvia, Russia, Ukraine and Romania. This distribution is surprising given that the most independent central banks are not necessarily situated in the advanced countries of Eastern and Central Europe: Georgia and Moldova have relatively independent central banks whereas Latvia’s is considerably more restrained. While central bank laws make central banks more or less independent legally, as it is the case with executive power, the independence of central banks in practice can be much different than what is included in the constitution.

The last set of variables in the federal-unitary dimension consists of constitutional amendment procedures and the past incidence of judicial review. Flexible amendment procedures are associated with majoritarian models, where constitutions can be changed by simple majorities. At the other end of the spectrum are the more rigid constitutions associated with consensus democracy that can only be amended by supermajorities. Following Lijphart, the variable used in the analysis ranges from 1 though 4: (1) where only simple majorities are needed, (2) for more than majority but less than two thirds, (3) for two thirds and equivalent, and finally (4) for supermajorities (or special circumstances). Since most of the countries included in the study possess institutions of judicial review, the last variable, will be the incidence of judicial review, a dummy variable coded (0) for absence of previous review and (1) when there was review.

**A Two-Dimensional Conceptual Map of Democracy?**

One of the core findings of *Patterns of Democracy* is a two-dimensional map where ten variables are clearly and strongly correlated in two separate clusters. By looking at the correlation matrix in table 2.1, the first striking result is the absence of a clear pattern of correlation among the institutional features from the nineteen post-

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9 Data from Armingeon and Cajera (2004).
communist countries included in this study. In general, correlation coefficients should not be compared across different samples because they are highly sample-dependent measures: the denominator used in the formula to calculate the correlation coefficient is the standard deviation of the sample. Still, in the present case their comparison serves explicitly to highlight the likelihood that both Lijphart’s and my findings are statistical artifacts of the samples used or that these two samples are substantively different from one another. By contrast with *Patterns of Democracy*, very few variables are correlated within each dimension, even more, some are linked across different dimensions.

---Table 2.1 about here---

Only three correlation coefficients resemble Lijphart’s findings in the first cluster representing the executive-parties dimension: the index of corporatism is negatively linked to the effective number of parties and executive dominance is related to both minimal winning cabinets and electoral disproportionality. By contrast, the “backbone” of the first dimension, the percentage of minimal winning cabinets, a measure “conceptually close to the essence of the distinction between concentration of power and the joint exercise of power,” is not even associated with electoral disproportionality, of which it is supposed to be dependent (Lijphart, 1999, p.245). The most surprising finding is the lack of association between minimal winning cabinets and the number of effective parties, the “second key component” of this cluster. While Lijphart obtained a strong correlation coefficient ($r = -0.87$) between the two items, there is no significant relationship between these two variables in this sample. While previous studies demonstrated that effective number of parties was inversely correlated with executive dominance, we find the opposite situation within our sample here.

The absence of connection between the disproportionality index and the number of parties may be in part due to the presence of mixed electoral systems (Massicotte and Blais; 1999; Moser, 2001) but also to the effects of presidentialism (or weaker legislatives) on party systems (Mainwaring, 1993; Shugart and Carey, 1992). Indeed, the number of effective parties is only associated with executive dominance, but in the opposite direction posited in *Patterns of Democracy*. In Lijphart’s sample of thirty-six mature democracies, effective number of parties is negatively correlated with executive dominance (more parties equals less dominance) whereas in post-communist countries,
more parties are associated with more executive dominance, which highlights crucial differences between the two samples. Closer observation of the data, illustrated in figure 1, reveals that two countries appear to exert a strong pull on the regression line: Russia, and Kyrgyzstan. It is only when these two cases are removed from the analysis that the relationship between the number of effective parties and presidential power assumes a form that is closer to what is Lijphart hypothesized. However, once the outliers are withdrawn, the relationship is no longer significant. This finding seems to confirm Mainwaring’s (1993) conjecture that strong executives reduce the incentives of large parties to form, hence the multiparty systems found where executives are strongest.

---Figure 1 about here---

On the federal-unitary dimension, the most interesting finding is the lack of association between any measures besides the incidence of previous judicial review and bicameralism. The degree of central bank independence is not correlated with any other variable except amendment difficulty, but in the opposite direction from Lijphart’s results. The same absence of association can be observed for the variables depicting bicameralism and judicial independence. These results may be explained by several factors in large part in relation to the nature of the sample. From this perspective, it should be emphasized that the sample only contains a limited amount of cases, therefore rendering significant relationships difficult among variables. Moreover, the composition of the chosen sample certainly plays a role. Lijphart has more variety along his index of federalism in the thirty-six countries he chose. For instance, our group of countries contains only one federal system, Russia which is rather centralized when compared with Canada or Germany. The fact that the smaller countries of Eastern and Central Europe have higher levels in both development and democracy, and that the only other federation, Russia, is not doing as well has direct effects on the results. In addition, according to Robert Dahl, we usually find bicameral legislative arrangements in federal systems, but given the inclusion of only one federation it is not possible to test this proposition, which also might explain the lack of correlation between degrees of bicameralism and centralization (Dahl, 2002). While Lijphart’s sample is mostly

---Figure 1 about here---

10 The only other possible federal system is Azerbaijan, but was dropped from the sample since it hasn’t gone through a process of transition.
composed of parliamentary systems, the post-communist states are more likely to have hybrid systems or even presidential arrangements.

Nevertheless, the nature of the sample alone cannot account for all the variation between the two studies of interest. If we speculate that constitutional arrangements were either the products of strategic bargaining between key actors or the outcomes of long lasting legacies, it becomes even more counterintuitive to believe we could replicate Lijphart’s two dimensional map of democracy in newly democratic states. The source of diverging institutional trajectories are to be found in the historical legacies left on institutions and society, but also as the outcome of bargaining that yielded different results in the various settings. For example, central banks in post-communist countries and OECD countries have contrasting histories. Especially for the candidates to the European Union some provisions of central banks were imposed conditions. Others like in Russia took the steps on their own for other reasons, such as a way of wrestling control from the Soviet central bank.

Unquestionably, the short time elapsed since the countries’ first democratic elections certainly accounts for some of the counterintuitive findings. Since most states had only between two and five elections, some features of their political institutions are still subject to change. But perhaps the dissimilar findings in correlation patterns in the ten variables from one sample to another also points to the differences that are present between democratic consolidation and stability. The fact that there is no two dimensional map of democracy in post-communist states might be evidence that countries that have had a long experience of democratic ruling acquire characteristics that are still absent in younger institutions or simply that Arend Lijphart’s typology is based on the experience of a few specific states and does not travel well outside OECD countries for cultural reasons. The absence of empirical support for the two-dimensional map of democracy also reveals that the choice of a sample with over 19 years of democratic survival does not allow Lijphart to make inference about democratic consolidation given the absence of rigorous testing outside stable democracies. Since democratic institutions are not likely to collapse in stable/advanced democracies, there is little empirical basis for the comparison of institutional performance at maintaining democratic stability (Dahl, 2002, p.93). By including democratizations that are still incomplete, or on a backward trend in
the sample, and comparing them to cases of successful democratization, we may have better grounding to make such generalization, at least within the post-communist context. On the negative side, this also means that we still do not have a framework by which we can explain the large variations in types of post-communist political systems: an important variable is thus still missing from institutional analyses.

**Performance of Majoritarian versus Consensus Features**

At this point, positing that there is neither an executives-parties nor a federal-unitary dimension in post-communist countries seems more prudent than to assume their existence. Consequently, it would be ill advised to cluster in scales the elements from each dimensions in order verify whether Lijphart’s conjecture that consociational democracies are indeed ‘better, kinder’ types of arrangements.\(^{11}\) Since the prescriptive status of Lijphart’s consensus versus majoritarian dichotomy rests on empirical correlation between specific items, the absence of a two-dimensional conceptual map of democracy also leads to the necessity of revisiting the validity of Lijphart’s recommendations for new democracies, item by item. Evaluating the effects of individual components from Lijphart’s typology offers the advantage of possibly identifying which features of institutional design are more important for democratic quality and consolidation when all the others are held constant. Using multivariate Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression analyses, two separate sets of models will test each item of the parties-executives on quality of democracy and representation indicators on the one hand (Freedom House ratings from 2003-2004, women’s parliamentary representation in 2004, the rich-poor ratio in 1999, voter turnout at the last parliamentary elections and a corruption index) and on indicators of ‘gentleness’ of democracy on the

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\(^{11}\) The scale reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s Alpha), measuring how well a set of items measures a single unidimensional latent construct for the executive-parties dimension is of 0.36, while it is of 0.10 for the federal-unitary dimension. These low values indicate that the combined items have multidimensional latent constructs, thus that one single index combining these items would not be reliable. However, the lack of association between most variables in each of Lijphart’s dimensions in the sample also guarantees a low likelihood of multicollinearity problems in the multivariate equations. In effect the low values of variance inflation factors could have the effect of the making t-statistics for significance testing smaller. Nevertheless, this should not be used as an excuse for statistically insignificant coefficients given the small size of the sample under study. See Berry & Feldman (1985).
other hand (social expenditures in term of health and education from 2000, energy efficiency in 2000, incarceration rates from 1999 to 2003, and use of the death penalty).12

A) Consensus Democracy and Democratic Quality

--Table 3.1 about here--

According to Lijphart, consensus democracies are kindler and gentler towards their population. Table 3.1 present the results of multivariate regression on four indicators of quality of democracy. Even in the absence of a conceptual map of democracy in post-communist countries, several key prescriptions made by Lijphart still offer essential insights to assess the quality of democracy in post-communist countries, but not as he originally conjectured. For instance, the partial slope coefficients for effective number of parties have positive signs in the models predicting Freedom House scores, which represent findings contrary to what is to be expected from Lijphart’s framework. Also counterintuitive is the direction of the electoral disproportionality coefficients that are in the opposite direction. These results suggest that the electoral system and the number of parties may not have the importance Lijphart hypothesized for consolidation and quality of democracy when the other variables are held constant. PR systems are said to facilitate minority representation and would be expected to outperform plurality systems in that regard (Lijphart, 1996, p.167). Yet, there is little empirical evidence in post-communist countries that PR representation as a significant effect on consolidation/quality if democracy even if it is known to contribute to the better performance of institutions in stable democracies. The lesson for democratizing countries may not be that clear as to which electoral method is the better option (Lardeyret, 1996, p.179). Moreover, as it was earlier argued, these constellations are likely to be the results of the interplay between mixed electoral methods and presidentialism.

Despite some inconclusive results with regards to electoral methods and party systems, what is also revealed from table 3.1 is a partial confirmation some of Lijphart’s insight propositions. The level of executive dominance is a strong predictor of democratic outcomes in both political rights and civil liberties. These findings also

12 Because data is only available for 14 out of the 19 countries included in this analysis, corporatism had to be dropped from the analyses.
confirm hypotheses drawing from the tradition of Juan Linz’s work on democratization: a parliamentary system in a young democracy increases the possibility of a successful consolidation, while in presidential system, this likelihood is reversed (Linz, 1996). Whereas Linz’s original idea was based on the experience of Latin America, his followers also showed evidence in diverse settings of the advantage of parliamentary systems over presidential arrangement for consolidation in different settings including post-communist countries (Stepan & Skach, 1993; Mainwaring, 1993; Power & Gasiorowski, 1997; Fish, 1999). Concurrently with their findings, systems with stronger prime ministers consistently perform better not only in predicting democratic quality in our sample, but also the percent of women in parliament and the rich/poor ratio. Strong presidents are associated with lower percentages of women in parliament and larger gaps between rich and poor individuals, even when levels of development are controlled for (either GDP per capita or UNDP’s Human Development Index).

Recently under harsh criticism for being too simplistic and ignoring the historical legacies and bargaining processes, the assumption behind this position is the theoretical primacy of institutions as shapers political processes, which makes even more salient the issue of power arrangements in a constitution. On the other hand there is a very high probability of endogeneity, even spuriousness if there is a common factor such as state capacity driving parallel variation in both institutional choices and democracy. Although the direction of the causal relation needs to be further theorized, in many scholars view, it is not uncommon to see strong executives emanating from weaker state structures (Easter, 1997; Migdal, 1988; Young, 1994). Moreover, leaders of weak states typically turn their attention to staying in power, by adopting means that foreclose the use of power to fulfill their original purposes, pushing substantive policies are onto the backburner, (Migdal, 2001, p.55). This is the paradox or dilemma of state leaders and might explain why strong presidencies are associated with less democracy in this sample. The executives of the weakest states, (especially in Russia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan) have sought to stay power by enlarging their authority at the expense of other institutions (legislative, courts) and the civil society, hence slowly moving away from democratic ruling.

----Table 3.2 about here---
In the realm of the other indicators of democratic quality, items included in the executives-parties dimension perform particularly poorly, especially for the models seeking to account for turnout and corruption levels. For instance whereas Lijphart finds that consensus democracy items are significantly associated with high voter turnout and low corruption index, the models predicting these variables are not significant in the post-communist context. In fact, from the omnibus F statistics obtained for the regressions presented in table 3.2, in two cases we are not able to reject the null hypothesis that all slopes are equal to zero. Therefore it is safest to assume that all partial slope coefficients are probably null for models explaining turnout and corruption indexes. Even more, controlling for the level of development does not ameliorate the relationship of consensus democracy items to these variables. Thus consensus democracy features are not related to lower corruption levels or higher voter turnout in our sample.

B) Consensus Democracy and Gentleness of Democracy

Lijphart also demonstrated that consensus democracies were more likely to be welfare states, had better environmental protection records, lower incarceration rates and did not use the death penalty (p.275). Yet, looking at table 3.3 presents starkly different results. By contrast with his sample of mature democracies, where the lowest percent spending in social expenditures was Japan at 12.4 percent, the highest level (in 2000) in this sample is found in Croatia, with 14.1 percent. Not astonishingly the regression explaining social expenditures (as a percentage of gross domestic product) with the four indicators of the executives-parties dimension is not statistically significant at the 10 percent level. Presumably the minor amount of linear variance explained and the absence of statistical significance signals that an important variable has been left out of the model. Indeed, the regression only becomes statistically significant when the level of development is controlled for. However in such case none of the partial slope coefficients of the executive-parties items are significant. Therefore consensus-democracy features do not lead to welfare states in post-communist countries, level of development is the most important explanatory variable.

---Table 3.3 about here---

In the case of incarceration rates (representing the number of inmates per hundred thousand population from 1999 to 2004), although the model seems to account fairly well
for the dependent variable, outliers pose a serious problem to the validity of the results. From the model presented in table 3.3, larger quantities of effective parties are seemingly associated with high incarceration rates. Nevertheless, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and especially Russia, the countries with the most parties, also exhibit some of the highest incarceration rates in the world. Once these outliers are pulled from the analysis, the regression is no longer significant, even when controlling for levels of development. Using data from Amnesty International, a similar scenario unfolds for capital punishment. Higher amounts of effective parties are linked with death penalty usage: Kyrgyzstan and Russia still retain the death penalty for ordinary crimes, although Russia has not executed any prisoner for the last ten years. Most of the countries included in the sample have abolished capital punishment for all crimes, only Latvia and Albania have abolished the death penalty for ordinary crime but still use it for exceptional crimes.

Still, some features of the executives-parties dimensions seem to be associated with indicators of areas of activities in which consensus democracies should be kinder and gentler. In the case of capital punishment, minimal winning cabinet are negatively associated with death penalty which is a form of confirmation of Lijphart’s hypotheses. The same pattern is also observable in the model measuring environmental responsiveness with energy consumption efficiency but in the reverse direction (the ratio of GDP per unit of energy use, measured in kilograms of oil equivalent, PPP in US dollars per kgoe). This ratio of energy use to GDP provides a measure of energy efficiency where the lower the ratio, the better the energy efficiency. However in the present case, high percentage of minimal winning cabinets, a typical characteristic of majoritarian democracies, is associated with more efficient energy consumption. While, this relationship remains strong after controlling for level of development, it disappears completely when the biggest outlier, Albania, is removed from the analysis regardless of development levels.

**Conclusions**

Does consensus democracy matter? The record is thus mixed in post-communist countries. Empirical verification reveals that some items belonging to consensus democracy should be introduced in new constitutions: but not as the bloc of basic laws of constitutions as Lijphart originally suggested for two reasons. The first reason, and the
most important, ‘constitutional engineers’ as Lijphart calls them do not build institutions
from scratch after a transition: institutional design is more often than not a consequence
of prevailing elite power constellations, bargaining, as well as historical legacies.

The second reason why the introduction of consensus democracy provisions as a
bloc is problematic is that not all of its aspects are equally influential. Upon measuring
the individual impact of the components of consensus democracy, ‘constitutional
engineers’ should be aware of the better record of parliamentary arrangements as opposed
to presidential ones. Hence this confirms some of Lijphart’s insights as well as Juan
Linz’s position that the evidence in favor of parliamentary systems over presidential
arrangements is remarkably clear, but probably for reasons other than these scholars had
originally thought. Institutional analysis of this kind, by taking the state for granted,
loose sight of the varying role the state can assume in different contexts. And it is this
distortion that has led some analysts like Lijphart to the assumption that governing
authorities are more or less equal and to focus on the effects of institutions like party-
systems, executive arrangements, electoral methods and constitutional courts even though
they evolve in dissimilar environments depending in which state we study them. Party
systems and constitutional courts do not perform the same functions in states where no
definite set of rule was instituted or that the state cannot enforce them. It is far from
inevitable that rulers achieve predominance for the state and post-communist countries
seem like case-points. Consequently further research needs to look beyond constitutions
and institutional features such as party systems and electoral methods when we study
non-Western industrial countries.

In the end, in the case of post-communist countries, there is no such thing a two-
dimensional conceptual map of democracy like Lijphart observed in the more advanced
democracies. This lack of association between the ten available measures of consensus
democracy casts doubt on the generalizability of the theory developed by Arend Lijphart
in *Patterns of Democracy*. The absence of empirical evidence for Lijphart’s typology in
the post-communist setting seems to give weight to Matthijs Bogaards’ (Bogaards, 2000,
p.396) insight that the consensus versus majoritarian democracy typology as a “striking
case of description turned to prescription.” Not only does the concept of power-sharing
as a synonym for consensus democracy blurs the empirical versus normative uses of the
typology but also open the door for questions of political culture as a driving force in the correlation between consensus democracy items in northern Europe. Bogaart expressed a well founded concern for what seems like a tautological relationship between consensual political culture and the choice of matching political arrangements (p.410). The fact that the items do not correlate in the post-communist states may be simply be a sign that concepts like consensus and majoritarian democracy have only limited explanatory value as a classification scheme outside OECD countries.
References


Geddes, B. (1990). How the cases you choose affect the answers you get: selection bias in comparative politics. Political Analysis Vol. II: An Annual Publication of the Methodology Section of the APSA.


Project on Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Post-Communist Europe, University of Essex, http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/er_index.htm


Table 2.1

Correlation between 10 Measures of Executive/Parties and Federal/Unitary Dimensions

Variable 1: Effective Number of Parties
Variable 2: Minimal Winning Cabinets
Variable 3: Executive Dominance (Shugart and Carey)
Variable 4: Index of Electoral Disproportionality
Variable 5: Index of Corporatism
Variable 6: Index of Federalism
Variable 7: Index of Bicameralism
Variable 8: Index of Central Bank Independence
Variable 9: Index of Amendment Difficulty
Variable 10: Previous Judicial Review

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<td>0.511**</td>
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<td>0.001</td>
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<td>0.159</td>
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<td>0.201</td>
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<td>0.501**</td>
<td>-0.163</td>
<td>-0.152</td>
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*Correlation is significant at the 0.1 level (2-tailed)
**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)
***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
Figure 1

Political Parties by Executive Power

- All cases
- Outliers excluded
Table 3.1
OLS Regression of the effect of Parties-Executive Characteristics Indicators of Quality of Democracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Political Rights</td>
<td>Civil Liberties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective Number of Parties</td>
<td>0.198**</td>
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<td>0.078</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>0.520</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimal Winning Cabinets</td>
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<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.049</td>
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<td>Executive Dominance</td>
<td>0.109**</td>
<td>0.069*</td>
<td>-0.681**</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.041</td>
<td>0.037</td>
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<td>Electoral disproportionality</td>
<td>0.154**</td>
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<td>0.077</td>
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<td>0.450</td>
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<td>Constant</td>
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<td>Standard Error of Regression</td>
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<td>0.001</td>
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<td>N</td>
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***significant at the 0.01 level
**significant at the 0.05 level
*significant at the 0.1 level

Table 3.2
OLS Regression of the effect of Parties-Executive Characteristics Indicators of Quality of Democracy

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Effective Number of Parties</td>
<td>-0.115</td>
<td>0.216</td>
<td>-0.126</td>
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<td>0.620</td>
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<td>0.116</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimal Winning Cabinets</td>
<td>0.025</td>
<td>*<em>0.129</em></td>
<td>-0.002</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>0.071</td>
<td>0.011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Executive Dominance</td>
<td><strong>0.843</strong></td>
<td>-0.524</td>
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<td>0.318</td>
<td>0.411</td>
<td>0.061</td>
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<tr>
<td>Electoral disproportionality</td>
<td>-0.010</td>
<td>-0.444</td>
<td><strong>0.194</strong>*</td>
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<td>0.511</td>
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<td>0.093</td>
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<td>Constant</td>
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<td>57.249***</td>
<td>5.969***</td>
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***significant at the 0.01 level
**significant at the 0.05 level
*significant at the 0.1 level

### Table 3.3

**OLS Regression of the effect of Parties-Executive on Characteristics of Gentleness of Democracy**

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<td>0.026</td>
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***significant at the 0.01 level  
**significant at the 0.05 level  
*significant at the 0.1 level