

# A Global Trend towards Democratic Convergence?

## A Lijphartian Analysis of Advanced Democracies

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*The paper offers a broad and systematic analysis of the comparative trajectory of international democratic change. It tries to achieve this using a threefold approach. First, it challenges dominant caricatures and examines, in two brief case studies, the degree to which Switzerland and the UK remain extreme examples of consensus and majoritarian forms of democracy. To this end, the paper updates Arend Lijphart's seminal research on democratic forms and then re-positions both countries on a conceptual map of democracy for the period 1997-2007. In a second step, a meso-level analysis maps further cases. Third, heteroscedastic multilevel models and a much broader data base are used, which allows describing and modeling the variance of types of democracy over time, revealing information about the determinants of convergence. A series of hypotheses on the roots of convergence on an executives-parties dimension of democracy is tested. In sum, the findings indicate that while there has been a trend away from extreme types of democracy in single cases, no general trend of convergence can be observed over time, but substantial explanations such as pressure from globalization (to some degree mediated by the domestic institutionalized veto structure) still influence the variance of types of democracy.*

### KEYWORDS

Majoritarian; Consensus Democracy; Lijphart; Democratic Convergence, Patterns of Democracy

Arend Lijphart's career spans nearly half a century and has been dedicated to the study and understanding of democratic regimes and constitutional change. His *Democracies* (1984) set out his first major analysis of patterns of majoritarian and consensus governments. This was later revised and expanded in *Patterns of Democracy* (1999); while his *Thinking About Democracy* (2008) contains his latest thoughts and reflections regarding his methodology and conclusions. Put simply, Lijphart's central thesis is that democratic systems can be placed on an axis, which has majoritarianism at one extreme and consensualism at the other. Most democratic systems, Lijphart suggests, can be located on a continuum between these poles. The classic examples of these two poles are Swiss consensus democracy and the extreme majoritarianism found in the United Kingdom (UK), the latter delivered through the framework of the Westminster Model.

Whether these characterisations remain valid in the twenty-first century is a matter of contestation. Vergunst (2008: 39), for example, asserts that Switzerland remains 'the most typical case of a consensus democracy' and Möckli (2007: 17) argues that it still corresponds to 'the perfect consensus-based model'. By contrast a number of scholars, like for example Richard Rose (2000), have suggested that Switzerland is increasingly displaying elements of majoritarianism. Similar debates exist in relation to the UK. Peter Mair (2000: 34) has argued that, 'New Labour is currently engaged in what amounts to a full-blooded constitutional revolution, dragging the political system away from an extreme version of majoritarian democracy towards a more institutionally consensual model'. Whereas Peter Riddell (2007: 53) argues, 'At root, Blair has shown himself as much a majoritarian in his instincts as Thatcher'. And yet to date these polarised opinions have talked past each other (rather than to each other) and there has been little attempt to connect, understand or weave together their respective positions as part of a broader and coherent analysis of the comparative trajectory of international democratic change. This article, however, goes beyond simply synthesising

the broader material but instead builds upon fresh empirical research in order to offer a systematic analysis of democratic change in advanced democracies. In order to develop our argument this article is divided into six sections (outlined in Table 1).

**Table 1. Paper Overview**

Section	Focus	Core Question(s)
1	Analytical framework	What is the core essence of Lijphartian political analysis and how does it help us understand democratic change?
2	Methodology & Hypotheses	What are the main propositions we seek to (dis)prove?
3	Micro-level analysis	What does the analysis of recent developments in two 'extreme' models of democracy (the United Kingdom and Switzerland) indicate about convergence or divergence?
4	Meso-level analysis	How does a brief review of developments since 1997 in three more 'outliers' (Canada, New Zealand and Ireland) suggest about convergence?
5	Macro-level analysis	What does a large-n study of twenty-three countries suggest about the existence of general patterns of change?
6	So what?	Why does the research presented in this paper actually matter? How can it be located within the contours of much broader debates and themes?

In terms of locating this article within the broader literature on comparative politics, it is distinctive for four main reasons. (1) Although Lijphart's original research (covering the period 1945-1996) has been updated for specific countries (Bulsara and Kissane 2009, Flinders 2005, 2009; Studlar and Christensen 2006, Vatter 2008), it has not been replicated through an explicitly comparative analytical lens. (2) This article is methodologically eclectic and epistemologically reflective as our research is based on qualitative case studies and quantitative statistical analysis. (3) Lijphart's analysis suggested that towards the end of the twentieth century both archetypes - the UK and Switzerland - were actually evolving towards more extreme or 'purer' forms of majoritarianism and consensualism but the research presented here suggests that both polities have undergone a significant shift in the opposite

direction. Finally, (4) the research on which this article is based hints at a broader trend towards what we call democratic change that goes beyond the trajectory traced by the prototypical cases examined until now. This article, then, explores some of the mechanisms behind the trend by testing selected hypotheses of democratic convergence.

## I. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Arendt Lijphart has become associated, almost synonymous, with ‘state of the art’ constitutional political analysis. Mainwaring (2001: 171) suggests that Lijphart’s scholarship constitutes ‘the single most influential typology of modern democracies’; while Bulsara and Kissane (2009: 172) concludes that ‘it is difficult to discuss contemporary European democracies without reference to Lijphart’. Lijphart’s main argument is that democratic systems can be placed on an axis which has majoritarianism at one extreme and consensualism at the other. In the majoritarian model or Westminster model – Lijphart uses the terms interchangeably – political power is concentrated. It is a power-hoarding model. This form of democracy is, at its foundation, therefore highly elitist, politically muscular, based to some extent on mass-exclusion, and has little emphasis on public participation (the dominant institutional characteristics are set out in Table 1). The consensus model of democracy, by contrast, is based upon a rather different value-slope that emphasises inclusion, multi-party systems, proportional electoral systems, decentralized government, power sharing in coalition cabinets, and a broadly balanced relationship between the executive and legislature. As Schmidt (2010: 320) notes, ‘The consensus democracy (...) aims to divide power, to create checks and balances against the majority in the legislature and against the executive state authority’. A Lijphartian analysis of different forms of democracy is derived by a framework involving two dimensions (the *executive-parties* and *federal-unitary*) each containing five characteristics or

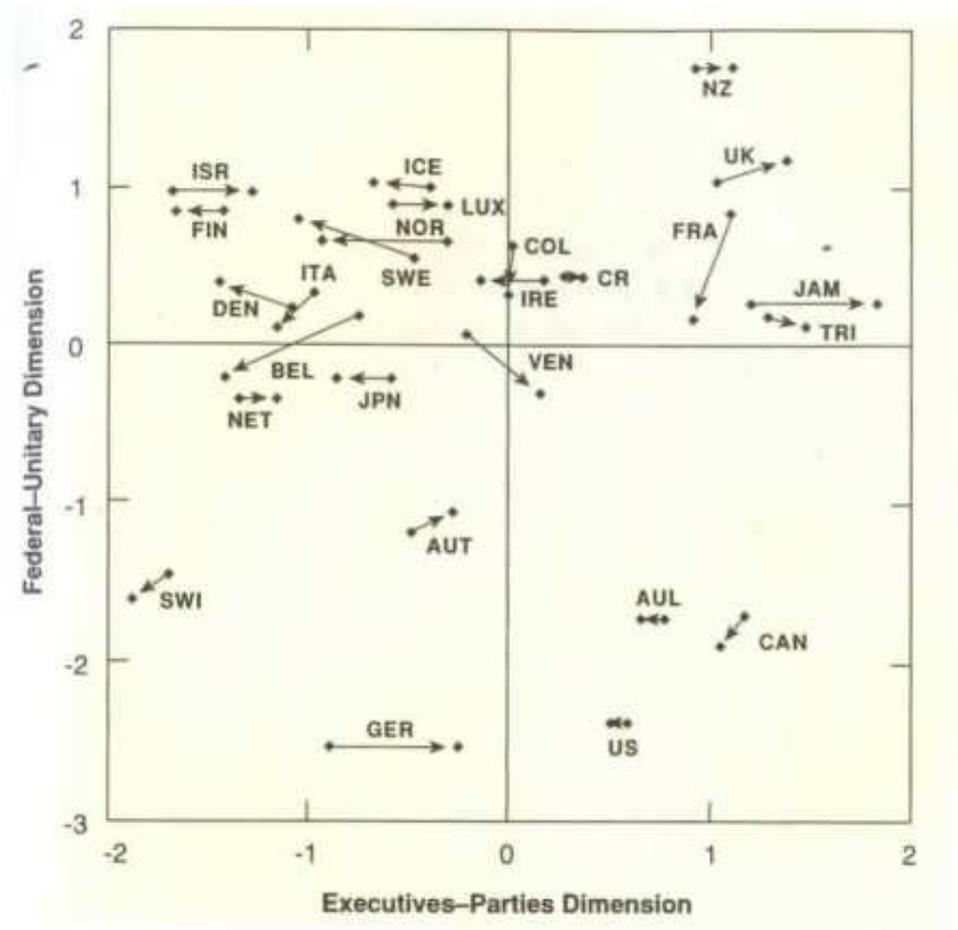
variables (see Table 2, below). The data-scores for each of the ten variables facilitate the creation of a ‘conceptual map’ on which specific forms or models of democracy can be located, and democratic change traced.

**Table 2 Lijphart’s Framework for Assessing Democratic Forms**

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Majoritarian</b>	<b>Consensus</b>
<i>Executive-Parties</i>	V1. Party system	Two party system.	Multi-party system.
	V2. Cabinets	Single party majority cabinets.	Power-sharing multi-party coalitions.
	V3. Executive-Legislative relationship	Dominant executive.	Executive-legislature balance of power.
	V4. Electoral system	Disproportional first-past-the post system.	Proportional representation.
	V5. Interest groups	Informal pluralist interest group interaction.	Co-ordinated and ‘corporatist’ interest group interaction.
<i>Federal-Unitary</i>	V6. Federal-unitary dimension	Unitary and centralized government.	Federal and decentralised government
	V7. Unicameralism – bicameralism dimension.	Concentration of power in a unicameral legislature	Division of power between two equally strong but differently constituted houses.
	V8. Constitutional amendment	Flexible constitution that can be amended by simple majorities	Rigid constitutions that can be changed only by extraordinary majorities.
	V9. Legislative supremacy	Legislature has the final word on the constitutionality of legislation.	Legislation subject to a judicial review of their constitutionality by a supreme or constitutional court
	V10. Central bank	Dependent on the executive.	Independent central bank.

It is important to emphasise here that while Lijphart’s two dimensions of democracy are conceptually related, they are by construction uncorrelated. Change towards either end of the majoritarian-consensualism axis can therefore happen on either of the dimensions independently. Each of the ten variables is analysed and then operationalized into a quantitative indicator. The characteristics for each variable on each of the two dimensions are then averaged so as to form two summary characteristics. These can then be used to place a country on a two dimensional map of democracy (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Shifts on the Two-Dimensional Map of Democracy from the period before 1971 to the period 1971-1996 (Lijphart 1999)**



The horizontal axis represents the executives-parties dimension and the vertical axis the federal-unity dimension. Each unit on these axes represents one standard deviation; high values indicate majoritarianism and low values consensus. Most of the prototypical cases of majoritarianism or consensus democracy are, as to be expected, in the top/right - bottom/left quadrant respectively on the conceptual map. As Figure 1 illustrates, Lijphart's research found that there were actually very few examples of 'extreme' or 'pure' majoritarian or consensus democracy. A longitudinal analysis of the second half of the twentieth century, however, revealed critical dynamics in relation to the manner in which different countries were evolving either

towards or away from Lijphart's majoritarian and consensual poles (Figure 1).

Of particular significance for the focus of this article is the manner in which Lijphart's study of the period 1971-1996 suggested that Switzerland and the UK were evolving towards purer forms of consensualism and majoritarianism (see Figure 1). Whether this direction of travel has continued into the twenty-first century, or whether, on the contrary, a broader trend towards democratic convergence can be observed, represents the core focus of this article.

## II. METHODOLOGY AND HYPOTHESES

The methodology underpinning the research and data presented in this article is derived through a three stage process that opens the analytical lens from the microscopic (i.e. small-n) to the telescopic (large-n). First, Lijphart's methodological schema is updated for the two 'archetypal' examples of majoritarianism and consensualism and each of the ten variables (shown on Table 2, above) for the period 1997-2007. The indicator values were standardised using a z-transformation and allocated to the two dimensions of power-sharing. The standardised values for the two dimensions were then entered onto Lijphart's two-dimensional map of democracy in order to update the position of the case studies on the axis of majoritarian and consensus democracies. Finally, a meso-level analysis maps further cases in some analytical depth. Finally, a broad data base adds a larger number of developed democracies to the map and heteroscedastic multilevel models are used to test the determinants of democratic convergence (or divergence) of types of majoritarian and consensus political systems.

However, before examining the results of this process it is necessary to locate this research strategy within the contours of our much broader argument concerning democratic convergence. While emphasising the role and power of Lijphartian political analysis within the parameters of debates concerning democratic change, we suggest that one potential weakness of Lijphart’s approach is that it pushes scholars towards a binary polarisation along an axis on which consensual or majoritarian political constructions exist at each pole – a conceptualisation that is arguably too blunt to comprehend the emergence of more subtle adjustments. As Lijphart (1999: 253) phrased it himself, ‘obviously, political systems can and do change’. The questions we would like to ask here, then, are *whether* democratic systems change over time, and *how* can democratic convergence (or divergence) be explained? Are there mechanisms at work pushing democratic change into one or the other direction, and is there a general pattern behind the reform trajectories of different democracies which we can observe and explain? In other words, have changes in the indicators “added up to shifts in the direction of greater majoritarianism or greater consensus on either or both of the dimensions” (Lijphart 1999: 253) not just regarding individual cases, but as a general trend? In order to structure our analysis three explicit hypothesis were adopted (see Table 3).

**Table 3 Three Hypotheses**

H1	Types of democracies converge over time: A drift has occurred away from ‘extreme’ or ‘pure’ examples of either majoritarianism or consensualism
H2	Convergence or similarity of types of democracy can be explained by globalization, but countries with less veto players respond more to it, yielding an interaction between veto players and globalization
H3	Convergence or similarity of types of democracy can be explained by membership in the EU

The first (descriptive) hypothesis advanced in this paper (Table 3, H1) assumes that, in the last decade, contrary to Lijphart’s previous findings, a general – albeit imperfect – trend towards what we term democratic

convergence, i.e. a move away from the extreme ends of the majoritarianism-consensualism axis, can be observed. While some polities move away from majoritarianism towards more consensual forms of politics, others have been going the other way, the result being a pattern of convergence oriented towards the middle of the conceptual map (Blondel and Battezzore 2003; Giuliani 2011). We further assume that this trend is not restricted to the outliers at the margins of Lijphart's map, but also concerns democracies that are closer to the middle of the grid. More specifically, through deliberate electoral reform the electoral system can be assumed to be a strong leverage point for democratic change, if, as Shugart (2003) shows, it is either extreme on the interparty or on the intraparty dimension and therefore prone to reformist pressures (see also Boix 1999). Both forms of extremes on the interparty dimension, i.e. either a pluralitarian system where a majority government is formed by a party with only a plurality of the vote, or a hyper-representative system where no majority is won, might entail inherent factors that propel electoral reform, pushing a pluralitarian system towards more consensus and a hyper-representative system towards more majoritarianism on that variable (Shugart 2003). Convergence pressure on extreme electoral design, then, results in convergence pressure on the executives-parties dimension (Taagepera 2003) and therefore a convergent trajectory of democratic change.

Our second hypothesis seeks to acknowledge that democratic change does not occur in a cultural void, but takes place within the contours of a cultural, political and institutional miasma. Majoritarianism and consensualism inculcate certain values – most simply power-hoarding or power-sharing – and these basic values then impose a certain logic or coherency to institutional or procedural decisions. Critically these cultural logics tend to become culturally entrenched to the point at which they form a powerful type of path dependency (Mahoney and Thelen 2010; North 1990; Pierson 2000). As a result Lijphart found that 'fundamental constitutional changes are

difficult to effect and are therefore rare' (Lijphart 2008: 178). Notwithstanding crises, polities hence rarely undergo a fundamental transition in the nature of their democracy and tend to stay in place, even if they are sub-optimal (Armingeon 2004). Reform trajectories appear to be bounded by certain accepted precepts and institutional arrangements that act as a form of bounded rationality which is reflected in the reform processes tending to occur within distinct parameters. Consensualism and majoritarianism may be modified, but rarely rejected. Political culture, historical legacies, and in particular institutional rules, then, are factors restricting democratic change. These can work both on the elite level by pre-empting certain institutional reforms that go against the basic principle of power hoarding or sharing, and on the level of the general public by channelling reform pressure or resistance in certain ways.

Due to the diversity of leverage points the exogenous factors propelling change are varied. They can come from within the state, bottom-up in the form of reform pressure or changes in political behaviour, or top-down in the form of elite-level decisions, or they can come from without the state in the form of international pressure. As such it is worth briefly identifying some of these mechanisms in order to complete the theoretical foundations upon which our explanation of convergence (or divergence, respectively) rests and, at the same time, providing a smooth linkage into our case study analysis.

One of the most widely discussed factors influencing state-level decision making today is the increased globalisation of politics (H2), which – hand in hand with the growing importance of supranational organisations – has a profound impact on several of the indicators of the patterns of democracy. Although research about the impact of globalization and supranational organizations on institutional change has been presented (Anderson 2002, Armingeon 2004; Armingeon and Careja 2008; Polillo and Guillén 2005), less attention has been paid to how domestic political institutions mediate the

relationship between globalization and democratic convergence. In other fields, e.g. tax policy research (Franzese and Hays 2008, Ganghof 2007) or welfare state research (e.g. Crepaz 2001; Ha 2008), globalization has been thoroughly discussed as a driver of policy convergence. We can assume that globalization may also pressure national states to change their *democratic* architecture. However, countries' reactions to globalization are not similar because different political actors or domestic institutions within the constitutional process have to agree on proposals for reforming the rules of the democratic game such as electoral laws. It is in exactly this vein that the veto player theory (Tsebelis 1995, 2000, 2002) argues that the higher the number of veto players, the more difficult it is to change the status quo. Although the veto player theorem was originally meant to explain differences in policy reforms, we can undertake a form of conceptual *travelling* – not *stretching* – to take the concept of veto players into the realm of democratic change. Indeed, to do so would be in-line with a host of studies that have adopted an institutional approach in relation to Europeanization. In order to assess, for example, if institutional features are systematically correlated to their degree of adaption to the European Union, Giuliani's (2003) analysis demonstrates that EU member states characterized by a low number of veto players can adapt themselves more promptly to the formal and informal requirements of Europeanization than member states with a high number of institutional veto points. Hence, in our context we could argue that the more numerous the institutional constraints of the central executive and of the parliamentary majority, the more likely democratic change will be blocked or delayed. Federalism, bicameralism, barriers to amend the constitution or a strong central bank do, *inter alia*, count as such veto points (Schmidt 1996; 2010).<sup>1</sup> In other words, we hypothesize that the core elements of Lijphart's

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<sup>1</sup> It is worth mentioning that a strong consensus democracy (in the first dimension) is not necessary a democracy with many veto players (SF, NL, ITA) or a strong majoritarian democracy (in the first dimension) may have many veto players (USA, BRD, CAN).

federal-unitary dimension have an impact on the degree of democratic convergence in the first dimension.

To be precise, we argue that globalisation and the influence of political institutions can jointly have convergent impacts on the direction of democratic change. This becomes evident when we consider the concrete impact of international pressure on domestic institutions. Once again, cognate research helps establish this argument. In taxation policy research (Franzese and Hays 2008), globalization is discussed as a major source of diffusion, as capital mobility induces competition between states and undermines national tax autonomy.<sup>2</sup> Often, this mechanism is expected to lead to a race to the bottom and hence convergence of tax policies. Similarly, for more globalized countries, we can expect convergence towards some model of democracy called for by globalization, which is particularly well-suited for the challenges of globalization. As we are interested in convergence as such, we do not necessarily need to specify which model of democracy this will be, as we only make predictions about the similarity of types of democracy, not about certain types. However, the theoretical argument benefits from a (preliminary) outline of how convergence could emerge. We argue that such a model will not be of an extreme type, as e.g. strong corporatism might deter capital, while on the other hand, some minimal labor standards (at least in democracies) are established. Similarly, while extremely consensual electoral systems and types and styles of executives might be too inflexible to react to globalization swiftly, majoritarian extremes might lack the policy stability needed to attract investments. It has to be noted that there are also arguments that there might be not be a single response to globalization. For example, globalization does not always lead to a race to the bottom in tax regulation, as “combinations of Left-government-associated policies and labor market-coordination can be as or more efficient than neoliberal state minimalism and

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<sup>2</sup> The work of Franzese and Hays (2008) also highlights another possible aspect of democratic change: diffusion. There might well be spatial dependencies between countries worth investigation.

conservative government” (Franzese and Hays 2008: 748, referring to Garret 1998). Furthermore, and of particular interest here, national peculiarities such as corporatism or inclusive political institutions might alter the response to globalization (in this case in terms of tax policy), leading to divergence for domestic reasons (Swank 2002). As will be illustrated our methodology and interactive hypotheses are particularly sensitive to such conditional arguments.

Bringing together the different concepts of (external) globalization and (internal) veto player enables us to state our second hypothesis as a conditional argument more precisely: we assume that the relationship between globalization and institutional architecture is dialectical and iterative (see Ha 2008). With reference to veto player theory we suggest that change pressured by globalization is more likely in systems with less veto players. In other words, convergence of types of democracy can be explained by globalization, but countries with less veto players respond more to it, thereby producing an interaction between external drivers and internal frameworks.

A third explanation relates directly to a particularity of globalization and the growing relevance of supranational organizations. A specific expression of this is the influence of the EU setting new boundaries and generating pressures for convergence (H3): “... a direct consequence of having to cooperate at the level of the European Union is to have to cooperate at the national level as well: countries cannot present ‘their’ case for a given policy in Brussels unless they are relatively united internally” (Blondel and Battezzore 2003: 247). On the other hand, “majoritarianism is essential for the governments of the EU Member States as it enables these governments to make their case more forcefully since it provides the basis for strong leadership recognised as such beyond the borders of the country concerned” (Blondel and Battezzore (2003: 22-3). Hence, both the move towards more consensus and the opposite trend towards more majoritarianism are the

consequence of the membership of the EU and the process of European integration in general. In short, the greater the misfit between between European and domestic institutional rules and procedures, the greater the pressure for institutional transformation and adaption (Anderson 2002; Armingeon and Careja 2008; Börzel 1999). Having outlined our three hypotheses regarding democratic convergence and briefly suggested some of the mechanisms responsible for the hypothesised trajectory of change, it is now possible to present the first stage of our empirical research – the case study analysis of prototypical cases.

### III. MICRO-LEVEL ANALYSIS OF TWO CASES

Even though, as we argue above, the trend towards democratic convergence is not restricted to the outliers at the margins of Lijphart’s conceptual map, and therefore is also not just the effect of random oscillation, we deem it appropriate here to focus first on the two prototypical cases Switzerland and the UK for two main reasons: (1) in the last decade, Switzerland and the UK have followed a trajectory of change that is at odds with what scholarly research had hitherto predicted, namely a further entrenchment at the extreme positions of the democratic axis; (2) change in the two countries has been triggered by very different mechanisms and has occurred on different dimensions. We therefore consider it useful to examine both cases before looking at a number of other cases and their trajectories of change in the next section.

#### *Switzerland*

A core element of the changing nature of Swiss politics in recent years has been the manner in which the party landscape (V 1) has evolved, particularly in relation to the success of the Swiss People’s Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei, SVP) in parliamentary elections since the beginning of the 1990s

(Kriesi et al. 2005). With an effective number of parties between 5.0 and 6.0 throughout the 1970s and 1980s Switzerland has traditionally counted amongst those countries with the greatest number of effective political parties. The steady decrease of party fragmentation over the last four national elections between 1995 and 2007 is mainly attributable to the triumph of the SVP (Kriesi and Trechsel 2008; Linder 2010). Despite a number of changes in Switzerland's hitherto extremely stable government formation (V 2) which have shaken the country, no change is registered on the executive-parties dimension regarding this second variable. In Switzerland, the four largest parties have been represented in government since 1959 according to their vote-share, expressed in the so-called party political 'magic formula' (Church 2004; Linder 2010; Steiner 2002). After the doubling of the SVP vote-share within two elections and the party's demand for a restructuring of the government, in December 2003 the parliament elected a second SVP representative, Christoph Blocher, to the government, at the cost of the weakened CVP (Church and Vatter 2009). While this changed the party political distribution of the cabinet seats for the first time since 1959, it did not affect the principle of concordance in terms of the involvement of the four major parties in governmental power. However, the weakening of the political middle in government went hand in hand with a stronger polarization in the executive, leading broad sections of the media to assert a crisis in the Swiss consensus system (Vatter 2008). Due to criticisms surrounding Blocher's provocative and adversarial political style he was replaced by Eveline-Widmer Schlumpf in 2007. Because Eveline-Widmer Schlumpf was not endorsed by the SVP leadership, the party carried out its threat and formally declared itself to be in 'opposition'. However, from the beginning this proved problematic and, in the end, the party largely dropped the idea and returned to government in January 2009 (Church and Vatter 2009).

In terms of executive-legislative relations (V 3), Switzerland has become slightly more majoritarian in recent years. Although the Swiss Federal

Assembly has a strong, independent position in the constitutional configuration and is formally the 'highest power' in the state, the actual reality of this situation has been contested (Lüthi 2006). Recent studies suggest that although the Federal Assembly can be viewed as an active legislative body, its limited resources ensure that its influence continues to be selective. For this reason Schwarz et al. (2009: 24) describe the Federal Assembly as a 'formally strong and informally weak parliament'. Regarding its electoral system (V 4), Switzerland has an above-average disproportionate PR system. Another indicator that shows Switzerland moving slightly in the direction of majoritarianism is the interest group system (V5). The economic downturn at the beginning of the 1990s and the subsequent unusually sharp increase in the unemployment figures led to a transformation of the existing system of collective bargaining. Mach and Oesch (2003) and particularly Häusermann et al. (2004) appear to be convinced that there is a general weakening of corporatist negotiating processes in the sphere of Swiss social policy. Overall, the moderate liberal-corporatist interest groups system in Switzerland thus displays more pluralist features, in particular with regard to the high degree of decentralisation and deregulation in industrial relationships, as well as the dilution of the normative character of collective agreements.

As opposed to on the executive-parties dimension, no change towards more majoritarianism registers on the federal-unitary dimension for the Swiss case, on the contrary. Regarding the vertical division of power (V6-V8), Switzerland can be considered as one of the most federal countries, whose sub-national entities are among the most influential member states in relation to the central state (Vatter 2006). The most recent developments on the whole make clear that no change to the placement of Switzerland on Lijphart's Indices of Federalism, Bicameralism and Constitutional Rigidity is appropriate. The only change that can be observed on the federal-unitary dimension concerns judicial review (V9) in Switzerland, which, however, due to recent developments, has become slightly more consensual. Despite the

reorganisation of the federal justice system in the course of the most recent constitutional and judicial reforms, so far no constitutional court system has been introduced in Switzerland. Nevertheless, Kälin and Rothmayr (2006) detected some traces of constitutional jurisdiction in the area of basic rights, where the federal court has been prepared to review the ECHR-compatibility of the federal statutes. Finally, regarding central bank independence (V 10), Switzerland has one of the three most independent central banks in the democratic world. The objective of the new National Bank Act 2004 was primarily to define the National Bank's duties in more detail and to clarify unresolved issues, such as formally establishing the Bank's independence.

### *United Kingdom*

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century the UK remained a two-party system (V1). Replicating Lijphart's analysis using the data for the 1997, 2001 and 2005 general elections produces a mean score of 2.28 which would support the conclusion that the UK remains a 'two-party' or, at best, 'a two and-a-half-party' system at the national level (Lynch and Garner 2005). Government formation (V2) for the period 1997-2007 has largely remained unchanged. New Labour enjoyed a minimal winning cabinet with parliamentary majorities of 178, 166, and 71 after the 1997, 2001 and 2005 general elections respectively. Consequently, one-party cabinet bolstered by a large parliamentary majority was the dominant (100%) form of government during 1997-2007. Regarding executive legislative relations (V3), the UK was viewed as the 'exemplar of Cabinet dominance in the Westminster Model' (Lijphart 1999: 134). Although New Labour were elected in 1997 with a commitment to shift the balance of power from the government to Parliament, by 2001 Gregory's conclusion (2001: 47) that 'parliamentary reform started with a bang but has ended with a whimper...with no support from Downing Street, the initial momentum quickly dissipated' was supported by a wide range of scholars, MPs and former ministers. By 2007 a

broad consensus existed that the balance of power had shifted since 1997 but it was in the direction of the executive, not legislature (Flinders 2007). The UK remains a polity exhibiting 'executive dominance'. The degree of electoral disproportionality (Lijphart's index measure for V4) actually increased during 1997-2007 rather than diminished. As regards the interest group system (V 5), the UK was placed very near the pluralist end of the spectrum, a result that is in line with the broader acceptance of the UK as an archetypal majoritarian country. Put simply, in 2007 the UK remained firmly located towards the higher end of the index of interest group pluralism with a score of 3.4 - indicating that no fundamental change has taken place.

Contrary to the stability exhibited by the indicators on the executive-parties dimension, some indicators of the federal unitary dimension display significant change in the case of the United Kingdom (V6). The introduction of a system of asymmetrical devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland since 1998 has introduced significant change and the UK can now be characterised as lying somewhere between a 'semi-federal' or a 'unitary and decentralized' classification. The quasi-federal nature of the UK's division of powers would therefore receive an index score of 2.5. Only very little change is observable regarding legislative chambers (V 7). The dominance of the elected House of Commons over the appointed House of Lords led Lijphart to describe the UK as having a 'near-unicameral' The *1999 House of Lords Act* duly removed all but 92 hereditary peers from the Lords and was designed to be 'Stage One' of a reform process that would eventually lead to exclusion of the remaining hereditary peers when reforms to introduce an elected component (i.e. 'Stage Two') were implemented. 'Stage Two' remains incomplete. The removal of the hereditary members, however, stimulated a cultural shift within the Upper House through which its members have since 1999 been more willing to assert themselves against the Lower House (and therefore against the executive). It is in this context that Russell and Sciara (2009) argue that 'Stage One' mattered because, 'Using Lijphart's terms, this moves Britain in the direction of consensus democracy'. Also in terms of

Constitutional Rigidity (V 8) the UK has not moved in either direction on the Lijphartian axis. The UK's arrangements for amendments to the constitution remain highly flexible and procedures for amending the constitution tend to be subject to much sterner thresholds in other countries. The absence of explicit and stringent constitutional amendment procedures may partially account for the way in which New Labour's constitutional reforms have so often been criticised for being rushed, ill-considered and deficient in terms of consultation. Moderate change, on the other hand, is displayed by variable nine, judicial review (V 9). During 1997-2007 two pieces of legislation - the *Human Rights Act 1998* and the *Constitutional Reform Act 2005* - significantly changed the nature of constitutionalism in the UK. The former incorporated the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into UK law; the latter created a Supreme Court and instituted a sharper (though not total) separation of powers between the executive and judiciary. The impact of these statutes was, however, diluted due to the manner in which they were designed and implemented within the contours of the majoritarian Westminster Model (Woolf 2004). Re-applying Lijphart's methodology for this variable results in a move from 'No Judicial Review' to 'Weak Judicial Review'. Finally, the degree of central bank independence (V 10) in the UK has also altered significantly. The idea of a new role for the Bank of England had been an element of New Labour's strategic planning since the mid-1990s and was subsequently included in the 1997 election manifesto. Just five days after their election victory the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, wrote to the Governor of the Bank of England setting out new arrangements for monetary policy-making which transferred operational independence to the Bank. These plans were confirmed later in a statement to Parliament and subsequently legislated for through the *Bank of England Act 1998*. Significant change has therefore occurred in relation to this variable.

### *Synthesis*

Figure 2 (see below) suggests that Switzerland and the UK have both evolved away from being 'archetypal' versions of consensual and majoritarian democracies. However, Figure 2 also suggests that the specific nature of democratic drift in each country has been one-sided. In Switzerland, significant change has occurred along the Executive-Parties Dimension (variables 1-5). Four of the five variables display slightly more majoritarian features than in the period from the 1970s to the mid-1990s. Although the changes in the indicator values are not very pronounced in individual cases, the overall concerted movement of the individual power-sharing features has led Switzerland to lose its former lead-position as an extreme example of a consensus democracy. Evidence of a decrease in the level of fragmentation within the party system (V1), more executive dominance over the legislature (V3), increasingly disproportional electoral results (V4), and the increasingly pluralistic features of the interest group system (V5) have combined to create a form of polity in Switzerland that falls behind that found in Belgium, Denmark and Finland during the 1970s to 1990s in terms of the Executive-Parties Dimension. As Figure 2 reflects, Switzerland exhibits stability in relation to the Federal-Unitary Dimension as the existence and role of various anti-majoritarian institutions remains relatively constant (reflected in a score of -1.81 for 1997-2007 compared to Lijphart's -1.61 for 1971-1996).

In the UK reform has also been one-sided but in this case significant change has occurred against the expectations of H3 (i.e. along the Federal-Unitary Dimension), largely as a result of devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (V6), incorporation of the ECHR and the creation of a Supreme Court (V9), and the granting of operational independence to the Bank of England (V10). In this sense the analysis offered has validated Norris's (2001: 881) suggestion that if Lijphart's research was updated for the UK it would reveal that 'the federal-unitary dimension of British government has been transformed far more than the executive-party dimension'.

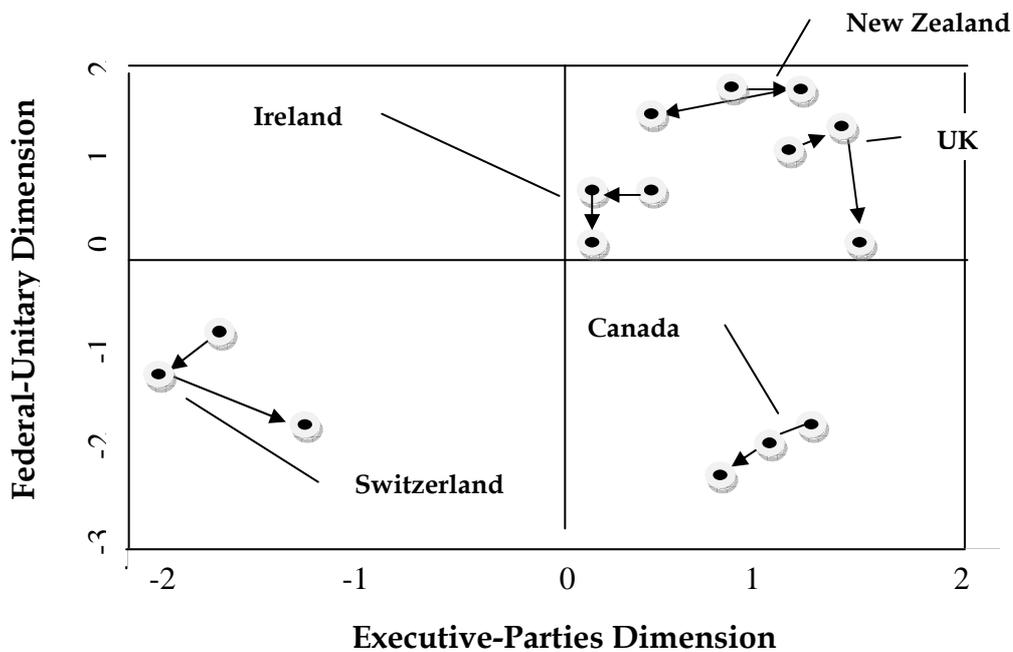
Our analysis encourages us to consider the variables that may have stimulated or restricted democratic change in the two prototypical democracies. The pattern of change that has been identified in Switzerland did not occur as a result of an explicit and executive-led programme of constitutional reform. It occurred through a mixture of incremental and relatively low-level changes to the constitutional configuration which had the cumulative effect of (slightly) altering the nature of Swiss democracy along primarily one dimension (see Vatter 2008). These changes, it can be argued, were at least in part spurred by two of the mechanisms we identified above as the driving factors of democratic convergence, and interestingly, in Switzerland they had somewhat opposing effects. While international pressure on the one hand pushed Switzerland to become more consensual on the federal-unitary dimension (judicial review), it also resulted in more majoritarianism on the executive-parties dimension. More majoritarianism in Switzerland is also arguably the effect of “the end of ideology” and new cleavages, resulting in a less fragmented party system and fundamental changes in government formation, even if these do not register on Lijphart’s indicator. However, these changes also occurred within a cultural context that remained relatively satisfied with the operation and performance of democracy and consensualism, which is also expressed in the continuous support for consensual government among both the elite and the public despite the recent and partly striking changes in government formation. Put slightly differently, the transition in Switzerland was neither planned nor articulated as an unequivocal move towards majoritarianism. On the contrary, the peoples’ satisfaction with and continued support for consensualism can be considered here as one of the parameters of the dominant ideational context that sets the boundary for democratic change in Switzerland.

The situation in the UK was quite different. New Labour was elected into office in 1997 on the basis of (*inter alia*) an explicit promise to bring forward an extensive programme of constitutional and democratic change based upon power-sharing. And yet the Labour Party had throughout the twentieth century been committed to the benefits of (power-hoarding) majoritarianism and was therefore suspicious of reforms that risked diluting their future governing capacity (Evans 2003). The output has been the introduction of a system of *modified majoritarianism* in which the policy momentum and public pressure behind reform has been channelled and vented, to some extent, through a form of hybrid-constitutionalism or 'bi-constitutionalism' in which New Labour has attempted to construct a more consensual polity within the contours of a majoritarian system but without explaining why it feels one mode of governance is appropriate for the devolved-level but not the national level (Flinders and Curry 2008). As a result the UK is, as Bogdanor (2003: 719) notes, 'constitutionally speaking, in a half-way house' or as King (2007: 345) more starkly concludes 'a mess'. And yet to describe recent events in the UK as 'a mess' risks overlooking the existence of an executive mentality which has during 1997-2007 been committed to retaining power at the core. This point brings us back full circle to the manner in which Lijphart emphasised the power and role of political cultures in terms of embedding certain beliefs and assumptions about the distribution of power within a polity. What this analysis of Switzerland and the UK has revealed is that neither polity has undergone a *fundamental* transition in the nature of their democracy. Their reform trajectories appear to have been *significant* but at the same time bounded by certain accepted precepts that acted as a form of bounded rationality and this is reflected in the reform processes tending to occur within distinct quadrants.

#### IV. MESO-LEVEL ANALYSIS: THREE MORE CASES

The aim of this section is to locate this case study research within the contours of a broader perspective by utilising a wider research frame in order to construct a more robust epistemological and methodological foundation for our research. With updated data for a wider range of countries we test whether there is a general pattern towards democratic convergence. Figure 2 provides updated data scores for three of Lijphart's other prototypical countries (Canada, Ireland and New Zealand) and their trajectories of change on his conceptual map.

**Figure 2: Democratic Change in Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (1945-1996, 1971-1996, 1997-2007)**



##### *New Zealand*

New Zealand's Westminster constitution, for example, before the mid-1990s had been characterised as an 'executive paradise' (Zines 1991: 47). Reformist pressure and the 1986 Royal Commission on the Electoral System Report, *Towards a Better Democracy* led to the introduction of a mixed-member proportional (MMP) electoral system in 1993, the outcome of which was to make it much less likely that any one political party would achieve a majority

in Parliament. The overall effect has been to dilute executive power and make the executive less dominant. The rejection of a plurality electoral system in favour of MMP reflected public concern with the predominance of the executive, evidence of the vagaries of a highly disproportional electoral system and a desire for a more responsive and accountable system of government (Mulgan 1994). The impact of MMP should not be overstated. The Westminster traditions of majoritarianism and adversarialism persist, and secure majorities (single- or multi-party) can still control the House of Representatives to a greater or lesser extent through strict party discipline (Barker and McLeay 2000). However, majorities of this type are less frequent and as a result the overall dominance of the executive has been tempered and the legislature's role has been enhanced. Palmer and Palmer (2004: 370) conclude, "What MMP has done has been, in political terms, to break up the monopoly on power enjoyed under the FPP [first-past-the-post] system in Westminster by the party in government. In other words it has put an end to what Lord Hailsham called, when he was in opposition, 'the elective dictatorship'". Palmer's (1979) *Unbridled Power?* was re-titled *Bridled Power* for its fourth edition (2004) to reflect the changed dynamics and establishment of stronger anti-majoritarian institutions. Hence, it can be argued that New Zealand's convergent reform trajectory has been the result of reform pressure and malcontent with its extreme electoral system. At the same time, it was bounded by a majoritarian logic, thus restricting change to within the same quadrant of Lijphart's conceptual map.

### *Canada*

Canada shares with New Zealand a constitutional and political heritage arising from its colonial links with the UK and as a result was classified by Lijphart as a majoritarian-federal country. However, institutional attempts to deal with political expressions of ethnic-cultural divisions in Canada have led some observers to describe it as 'semi-consociational' (McRae 1997). Critical factors in this assessment include the development of Canadian federalism,

increased attention to the claims of Aboriginal peoples, increased demands for the relaxation of party discipline within the legislature, and increased controversy over the use and impact of judicial review. Studlar and Christensen's (2006: 841) re-application of Lijphart's methodology for the period 1997-2006 lead them to conclude that although it remains a federal-majoritarian polity 'over the past decade Canada has become somewhat less majoritarian on both dimensions'.

What is interesting about the evolution of democracy in New Zealand, Canada and Switzerland is that, like the UK, the extent of reform has been significant but at the same time restricted within the parameters of a distinct meta-constitutional orientation. The experience of Ireland also supports this theme but in a manner that is particularly relevant in relation to this article's focus on convergence towards the centre of Lijphart's conceptual map.

### *Ireland*

Ireland was integrated into the UK in 1801, and until 1921 its constituencies were represented at Westminster. The Constitution of the Irish Free State (1922), apart from adopting a proportional electoral system, conformed to the Westminster Model. The power-sharing effect of PR was undermined by the existence of nationalist cleavages which acted to promote two dominant nationalist parties and resulted in there being 'absolutely no curb on the untrammelled power of the executive'.<sup>3</sup> This situation altered in December 1937 when a new Constitution of Ireland came into force after being passed by a national plebiscite the previous July. This created a Supreme Court, a President with the power to refer legislation to it, and required that the constitution could only be amended by referendum. As a result Ireland became an 'intermediary' case of majoritarianism in Lijphart's framework.

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<sup>3</sup> Former Irish minister, quoted in Kissane (2007: 212).

More specifically reforms were introduced to moderate the perceived defects of a purely majoritarian system, but not to replace the system.

During the middle of the twentieth century cultural and institutional dynamics impelled Ireland towards a more consensual polity. What is significant about the Irish case is the manner in which this adaptation evolved over time. There was a significant shift on the Executive-Parties Dimension between the first and second periods, but a greater shift on the Federal-Unitary Dimension between the second and third periods. The initial shift arose from formal-institutional measures introduced under the 1937 constitution; whereas the second shift stemmed more from the cultural factors (e.g. a changing in the attitude of the judiciary, changing norms regarding the use of referendums, the use of 'social partnership agreements' with interest groups, etc.). And yet although Bulsara and Kissane (2006: 186) find that the 'Westminster Model is clearly in decline, and there is now more consensus politics on both sides of the Irish border' they also emphasise the manner which power remains centralised at the core. Although Ireland has evolved away from a two and-a-half-party system (V1), the electoral system remains the single transferable vote in multi-member constituencies STV with a rather low degree of proportionality (V4), a unitary and heavily centralised system (V6), and the second chamber (the Seanad) remains weak (V7). As a result Bulsara and Kissane (2006: 192) conclude their Lijphartian analysis by stating, 'Since 1937 power [in Ireland] has become more diffuse, but not enough to call the state a consensual democracy'. This finding underlines Lijphart's conclusion regarding the entrenched nature of majoritarian impulses and cultures. It also relates to the analysis of the 'Blair paradox' (i.e. significant change along one dimension but not the other) due to the manner in which twentieth century Irish political history provides an example of a constitutional reform programme, De Valera's 1937 constitution, in which powers were also decentralised along one dimension but at the same time centralised in other areas (see Mair 2004).

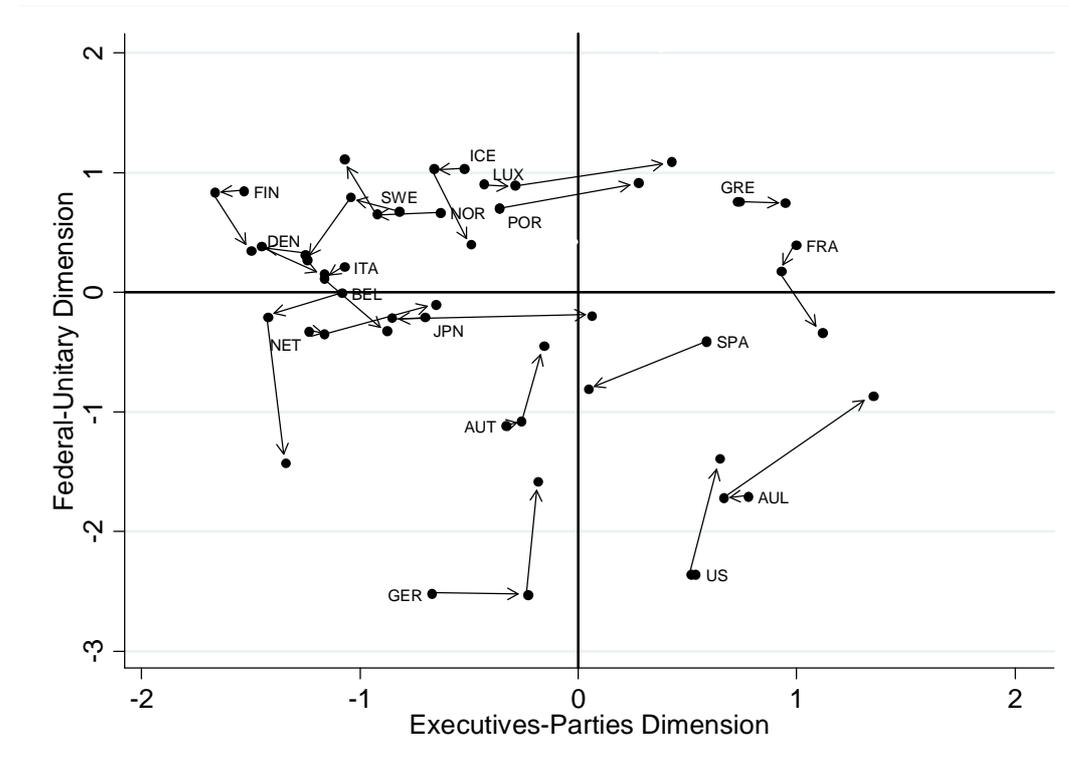
This very brief discussion of New Zealand, Canada, and Ireland is valuable because it provides some comparative reference points from which to reflect back upon the comparative trajectory of democratic change and the hypotheses advanced in Table 3 (above). The first and most basic insight gleaned from this brief review is that the nature of democracy within a country evolves over time as institutions, conventions, and cultures change. However what is also clear from Figure 2 is that – to paraphrase Lijphart (2008: 178) – fundamental constitutional changes are difficult to effect and therefore remain rare’. In this sense reform trajectories tend to be bounded by certain accepted precepts that act as a form of bounded rationality (reflected in reform processes tending to occur within distinct quadrants). A second notable feature of change is that it generally occurs in a uni-dimensional or ‘one-sided’ manner; resulting in directional movements that are either vertical (i.e. operationalized along the Federal-Unitary Dimension) or horizontal (i.e. vice versa) but rarely diagonal, in the sense of moving directly towards or away from a pure consensual or majoritarian form. This pattern or trajectory is further tested if we broaden our analytical focus to embrace a broader range of established democracies.

## **V. MACRO-LEVEL ANALYSIS: TWENTY-THREE CASES**

Drawing on Armingeon’s (2002) and Schmidt’s (2000: 348) criticism of Lijphart’s (1999) selection of countries, we concentrate our analysis on economically similar countries, namely, the 23 most developed OECD countries. The systematic comparison of the most advanced and wealthiest democracies not only has the advantage that it meets the requirements of the ‘most similar systems’ research design (Lijphart 1971; Przeworski and Teune 1970) and therefore avoids ‘mixing up most similar and most dissimilar case designs’ (Armingeon 2002: 88), it also enables us to ensure that our empirical

findings are based on reliable data, which is often not available for less developed countries (Lijphart 2002: 109). Figure 3 utilises the most up-to-date data-set for the remaining 18 consolidated democracies.<sup>4</sup>

**Figure 3: Democratic Change 1945-1996, 1971-1996, 1997-2007**



The trajectories plotted in Figure 3 show diminishing variance on the Federal-Unitary Dimension:<sup>5</sup> Germany, the United States, Austria, Australia, Iceland, Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands (in addition to the previously

<sup>4</sup> The observation points for 1945-96 and 1971-96 are the identical values originally calculated by Lijphart (1999). The observation points for 1997-2007 were calculated using updated data from Vatter's (2009) expanded model and attempts to strengthen the conceptual map of democracy by altering the measurements used to determine the original five variables per dimension by Lijphart. The 1997-2007 observation points in the above diagram were calculated to remain coherent with Lijphart's original design while using Vatter's new measurements. When measuring the federal-unitary dimension, Lijphart includes an index variable measuring strength of federalism. Vatter (2009) and Vatter and Bernauer (2009) however replace this index with two separate variables measuring *constitutional division of power* and *fiscal division of power*. Both variables have been combined to create a single variable measuring federalism to remain consistent with Lijphart's five-variable modelled dimensions. All five variables for each dimension have been standardised and signs reversed when necessary so higher values represent higher levels of majoritarianism. All five variables per dimension are then summed and standardised in accordance with Lijphart's methodology.

<sup>5</sup> While we have only 18 countries out of Lijphart's 36 on Figure 3, it can be furthermore argued that the Commonwealth countries (Barbados, Jamaica, Trinidad, Botswana etc.) were never archetypes, as they were always limited in terms of centralisation on the Federal-Unitary Dimension.

discussed cases of NZ, UK and Ireland) have moved from their outlier-positions towards the centre, decreasing the scale of the map by almost one standard deviation. In contrast, variance on the Executives-Parties Dimension has not decreased this sharply, the pattern displaying trends in both directions. This finding contradicts Lijphart's (1999) original prediction that change is more likely to occur on the executive-parties than on the federal-unitary dimension. A possible explanation for this can be found in the boundaries of change that are set by the cultural logic and basic values entrenched in a society. While changes on the Federal-Unitary Dimension can be effected top-down through constitutional change, changes on the Executive-Parties Dimension are more related to political culture and its influence on how politics is conducted on a day-to-day level. Hence, in Switzerland there have been moves away from consensualism on the Executive-Parties-Dimension, but these were bounded by the deeply entrenched consensual political culture in the country which is closely connected to direct democracy (Vatter 2000, 2009). On the other hand, the UK has witnessed changes on the Federal-Unitary-Dimension towards more vertical power-sharing which were in part responses to popular demands, but also here the move to more consensual politics has been bounded by a majoritarian rationality prevailing in the government (Flinders 2005, 2009).

The final analytical step in our methodology now tests the initial hypotheses (Table 3, above) on the determinants of change of democratic types by the means of a quantitative analysis, relying on a heteroscedastic model.

Gary King (1989: 65), in his classic book *Unifying Political Methodology*, emphasizes that '[f]or some purposes, modeling  $\sigma_i^2$  may be more interesting than modeling the expected value.' The widespread commonsense in quantitative applications is to model the mean of a dependent variable of interest, using covariates thought to influence its level. There are, though, research questions demanding a different perception of the data. For our

research question as well, the quantity of interest is the variance  $\sigma^2$  of the distribution of the dependent variable, not its mean. When asking for the determinants of convergence of types of political systems, the answer lies not in levels of the dependent variable, but its variation. The analysis is not about factors influencing the actual type of a political system, but about factors associated with similar political systems.<sup>6</sup>

Such models of the variance of distributions (or heteroscedastic models) are increasingly advocated by a number of scholars (Braumoeller 2006; Plümper and Schneider 2006). A few applications exist, which are well suited to explicate the logic of the model further. Selb (2009) shows that rather than due to the number of parties, PR systems display higher levels of turnout due to less variability in the competitiveness of elections compared to majoritarian systems. The higher variability of turnout in majoritarian systems is explicitly modeled using a heteroscedastic logit model of the mean and variance of turnout, clarifying the role of the competitiveness of elections in the relationship between PR and turnout. Braumoeller (2010) uses a heteroscedastic probit model to demonstrate that the degree of consensus among actors in peacekeeping missions leads to a higher variance in the success of the missions, as outcomes are more uncertain when a large number of actors with similar power have to coordinate their efforts. The involvement of superpowers, on the other hand, appears to reduce the uncertainty and the variance of the outcomes of peacekeeping missions.

These examples show the ability of heteroscedastic models to explore causal avenues affecting factors other than the expected value of a distribution. Similarly, to model convergence in this application, the variance of consensus democracy is modeled rather than its mean, as the argument of convergence relates to the variance of types of political systems, and does not make predictions about the type of political systems. A heteroskedastic multilevel

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<sup>6</sup> A note on the difference between convergence and diffusion is necessary. Convergence means the description and explanation of the degree of equalization of e.g. policies or political institutions. Hence, models of the variance of distributions are adequate. Diffusion, on the other hand, is more about processes than results, and not similarity, but sequences of adoption or contagion are studied (Holzinger et al. 2007), e.g. using spatial models.

model is used to implement the empirical test (King 1989: 65; Rabe-Hesketh and Skrondal 2008: 221).<sup>7</sup> The model has two parts, a location submodel for the mean and a dispersion submodel for the variance.

$$\text{CONS}_{ij} = \beta_0 + \mu_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

The mean of the type of democracy  $\text{CONS}_{ij}$  - consensus democracy on the executives-parties dimension - is modeled using an intercept  $\beta_0$ , a country-level variance  $\mu_j$  to capture clustering within countries, and a country-time point specific error term  $\varepsilon_{ij}$ . The country-level error term is assumed to be normally distributed (with variance  $\sigma_u^2$ ) around zero, as is  $\varepsilon_{ij}$  (with variance  $\sigma_\varepsilon^2$ ). No further substantial covariates are used for the location submodel.

$$\ln(\sigma_\varepsilon) = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \text{EU} + \alpha_2 \text{GLOB} + \alpha_3 \text{INST} + \alpha_4 \text{GLOB} * \text{INST} + \alpha_5 \text{T2} + \alpha_6 \text{T3}$$

The lowest-level variance of the type of democracy  $\sigma_\varepsilon^2$  is modeled using time dummies for the second and third period and a set of substantial explanations in the dispersion submodel (full model reported). The variance is transformed to the log of the standard deviation  $\ln(\sigma_\varepsilon)$  to guarantee strictly positive predictions of the variance. In addition to an intercept  $\alpha_0$ , representing the mean log standard deviation, EU membership (EU), globalization (GLOB), institutional constraints (INST) and the interaction between the latter two variables (GLOB\*INST) are used to explain the variance of types of democracy, yielding the estimates  $\alpha_1 - \alpha_4$ . The coefficients  $\alpha_5 - \alpha_6$  on the time dummies for the second and third period (T2 and T3) indicate changes in the variance of the type of democracies compared to the intercept and hence potential convergence or divergence of types of democracy over time.

The estimations are carried out as follows. In a first step, a test is performed whether democracies converge over time. This is done in a non-parametric fashion, which means simply that not a linear time trend is estimated but that dummies for the time period are introduced, allowing specific effects for each time period.

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<sup>7</sup> The model is part of the GLLAMM package for Stata, which estimates generalized linear latent and mixed models.

In a second step, potential substantial explanations for potential convergence over time (if any, or cross-sectional variation in the variance) are introduced, such as EU membership and globalization. Other factors should not necessarily directly influence the convergence of democracies, but constitute conditions for e.g. globalization to unfold its effect. For example, veto player theory suggests that change in general (e.g. pressured by globalization here) is more likely in systems with less, more homogenous veto players.<sup>8</sup> These factors are expected to be correlated with time, replacing a time trend with substantial explanations. They are, however, also potentially able to explain cross-sectional variation.

The dependent variable, the *consensual or majoritarian character* of political systems is measured as proposed by Lijphart's (1999) index of consensus democracy for the executives-parties dimension, composed of the standardized values of the disproportionality of the electoral system (reversed), the effective number of parties, majority or minimal winning cabinet type (reversed) and the degree of pluralism (reversed), but excluding cabinet durability because of its highly questionable validity and the strong criticism of Lijphart's operationalization of the executive-legislative relationship (see Vatter 2009: 134). The data set analyzed here hence features four political-institutional variables between 1997 and 2010 (2007, respectively) and is based on the data collected by Giuliani (2011) and Vatter and Bernauer (2011).<sup>9</sup> By focusing on a set of advanced democracies, the data included initially 24 OECD countries (see Appendix 2). Of these, Portugal, Greece and Spain have been excluded as data is only available for the periods T2 and T3 after democratization.

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<sup>8</sup> Note that the explanation of convergence of democracy types using veto player theory is not tautological, as the argument and model refers to the variance, not the mean (see hypotheses for further explanations). Furthermore, veto players are captured rather by Lijphart's (1999) federal-unitary dimension than by the executives-parties dimension.

<sup>9</sup> We would like to thank Silja Kohler (University of Berne) for collecting parts of the data and Marco Giuliani for providing us his large data set (see Giuliani 2011). The correlation coefficient between our updated Lijphart-Index (first dimension; 1997-2007) and Giuliani's updated Lijphart-index (first dimension, 1997-2010) is 0.91 (statistically significant at the 1% level), although we used different measurements for cabinets types and the executive-legislative relationship (see Bernauer and Vatter 2011; Giuliani 2011; Vatter 2009; Vatter and Bernauer 2009).

The independent variables for testing our three hypotheses are measured in the following way:

- Globalization: “Index for the extent of openness in capital account transactions. The index incorporates a variable indicating the presence of multiple exchange rates, a second variable indicating restrictions on current account transactions and a third variable indicating the requirement of the surrender of export proceeds. The higher the value the more open is the country to cross-border capital transactions” (Source: Armingeon et al. 2004: 9; variable *kaopen*).
- Institutional constraints: The starting point is the “[i]ndex of institutional constraints of central state government according to Schmidt (1996); Minimum value=0; Maximum value=6; Range of data from 0 to 5, high values indicate powerful constraints, low values are indicative of a large manoeuvring room available to central state government. Description: additive index composed of 6 dummy-variables (‘1’ = constraints, ‘0’=else) (1) EU membership=1, (2) degree of centralisation of state structure (federalism=1), (3) difficulty of amending constitutions (very difficult=1) (4) strong bicameralism =1 (5) central bank autonomy =1 (6) frequent referenda = 1” (Source: Armingeon et al. 2010: 7; variable *instcons*). EU membership has been removed from the index as it constitutes a separate variable in the analysis.
- EU-membership: yearly dummy variable (Source: Armingeon et al. 2010).
- Dummies for time periods T2 (1971-1996) and T3 (1997-2010).

All variables are measured as mean values for three time periods (given data availability): T1: 1945-1970; T2: 1971-1996; T3: 1997-2010.<sup>10</sup> See Appendix 2 for an overview of the data used.

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<sup>10</sup> There are a couple of missing values, including globalization for Luxembourg and Israel, and institutional constraints for Israel. For Switzerland, globalization is missing for the first period in time (see Appendix 2).

Table 3 summarizes the results of a series of heteroscedastic multilevel models. The main interest is in the estimates on the coefficients expected to influence the variance of the model. For the location submodel, reported in the upper part of Table 3, only a constant term is estimated, the covariates are introduced in the dispersion submodel in the lower part of Table 3. As mentioned above, these are not estimated as direct effects on the variance, but on the log of the standard deviation, to guarantee a strictly positive estimate of the total variance while modeling it. The estimates can easily be retransformed into variances.

Model 0 is an empty model without any substantial covariates or time dummies. The model provides an estimate of the mean of the type of democracy in the location submodel, along with a variance term for differences between countries. The latter is rather large and statistically significant, and compared to the variance at the lowest level (country-time periods), it reveals that about 91 per cent of the variation in the type of democracy is stable over time within countries. Put on its head, this also implies that about 9 per cent of the type of democracy varies over time within countries, a small but interesting enough share encouraging the explanation of this particular variance. The lowest-level-variance is also given, it indicates the variation which is not stable per country over time and will be modeled in the subsequent specifications. In Model 0, the variance is estimated directly, while in the next models, the log standard deviation scale will be used.

Model 1 introduces the time dummies for periods T1 and T2, in order to test Hypothesis 1 stating that over time, types of democracy converge. The time dummies can be interpreted as changes in the variance compared to T1, for which the variance is given by the constant term in the dispersion submodel. The results do not support the expectation of convergence. The variance increases over T1 for both T2 and T3, with the latter effect being more substantial and close to statistical significance. In sum, no clear and simple direction of divergence or convergence can be reported from Model 1.

**Table 3: Linear heteroscedastic multilevel models of consensus democracy over time (executives-parties)**

	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<i>Location: mean</i>							
Constant (mean)	.27 (.71)	.08 (.71)	.17 (.73)	-.14 (.76)	-.01 (.73)	.01 (.79)	.01 (.78)
<i>Dispersion: ln(SD)</i>							
<i>Country-time level</i>							
Globalization				.23 (.19)		.56 (.19)***	.97 (.27)***
Institutional constraints					-.27 (.10)***	-.43 (.12)***	.12 (.30)
Glob. X inst. constr.							-.27 (.13)**
EU membership			-.51 (.28)*			-.59 (.29)**	-.70 (.29)***
<i>Time level</i>							
T2		.19 (.60)	-.33 (.59)	-.17 (.58)	-.13 (.50)	-1.09 (.47)**	-.88 (.40)**
T3		.72 (.48)	.37 (.33)	.19 (.60)	.45 (.40)	-.92 (.53)*	-.84 (.53)
Constant	.99 (.22)***	-.40 (.39)	.05 (.31)	-.40 (.33)	.25 (.37)	.64 (.30)**	-.14 (.48)
<i>Random effect</i>							
Variance (countries)	10.22 (3.26)***	10.29 (3.29)***	11.04 (3.55)***	10.66 (3.63)***	10.32 (3.43)***	11.61 (3.88)***	11.25 (3.70)***
N (countries)	21	21	21	19	20	19	19
N (country-years)	63	63	63	56	60	56	56
Log Likelihood	-126	-123	-122	-111	-114	-103	-101

Note: \*p<.1, \*\*p<.05, \*\*\*p<.01. Standard errors in parentheses. All calculations were performed in Stata 10, using GLLAMM with the *s(het)* option to model the variance. The variance at T1 is captured by the intercept in the dispersion submodel. The variance is modeled directly in Model 0 instead of ln(SD).

Nevertheless, and as there is variation within countries over time which seeks explanation, Models 2 to 4 introduce the substantial covariates one by one. In Model 2, EU membership is added to the dispersion submodel, as EU member states are expected to form a convergence club. The sign of the

estimate is in the direction postulated, and reaches modest levels of statistical significance. EU member states indeed appear to have more similar systems compared to the rest of the sample.

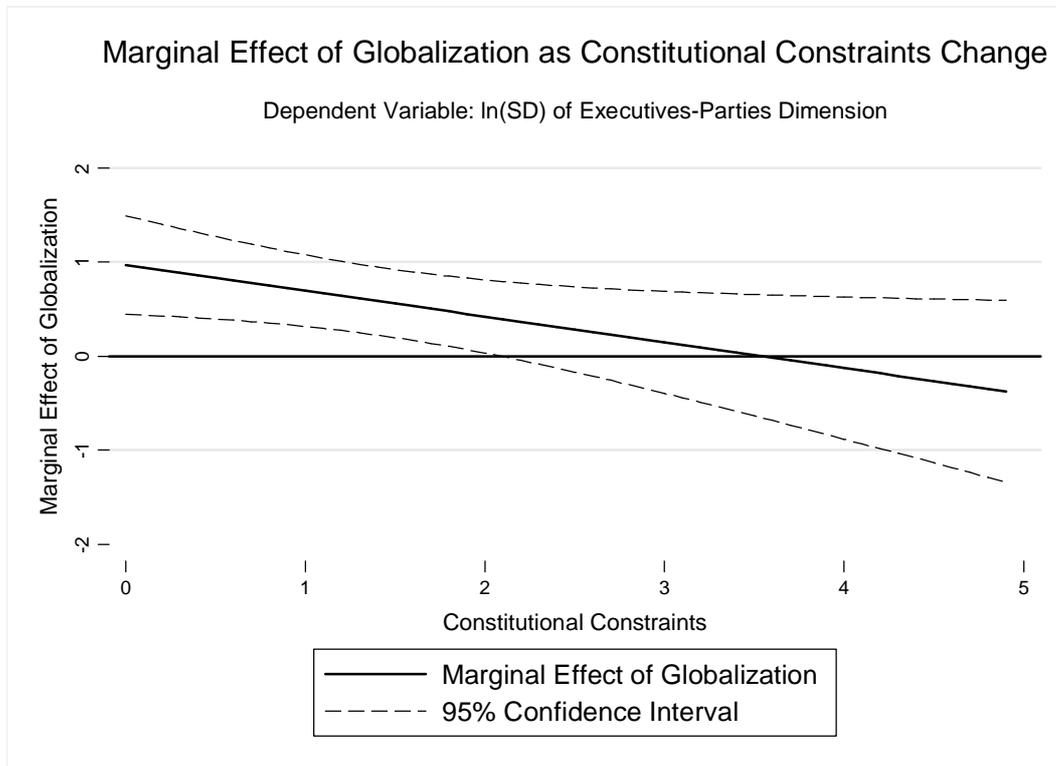


Figure 4

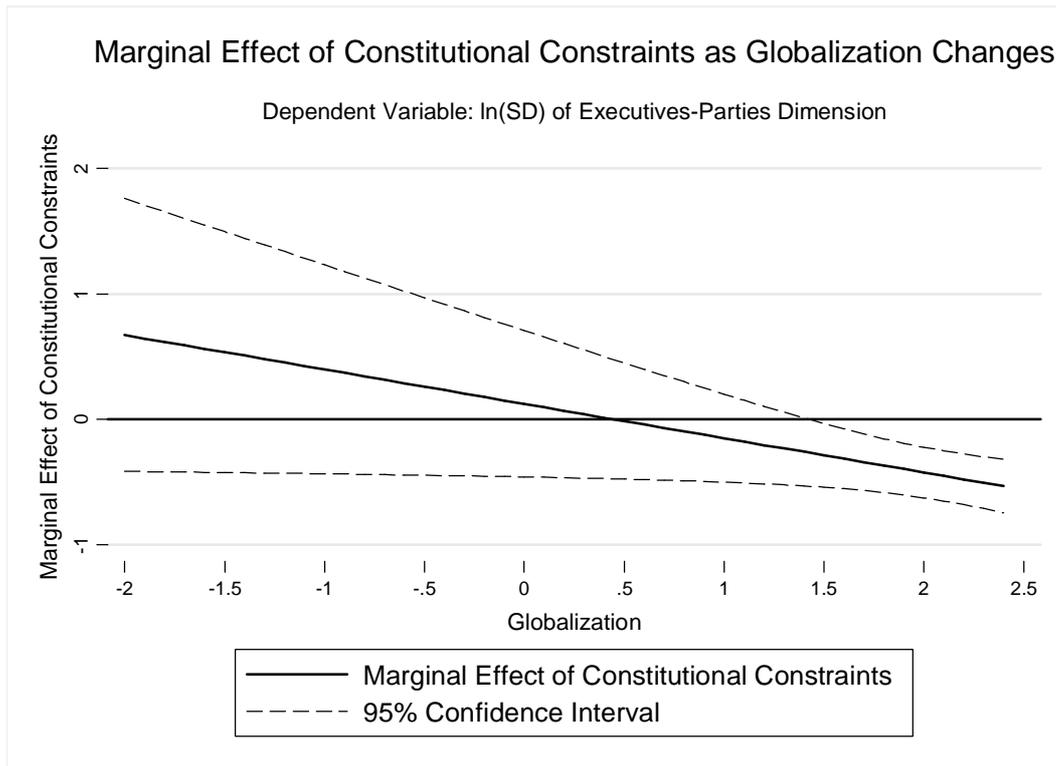


Figure 5

Model 3 adds the measure of globalization to the dispersion submodel, where we expect higher convergence towards a model of democracy called for by globalization. As we model the variance, we do not need to specify which model this will be, as we only make predictions about the similarity of types of democracy (variance), not about certain types (mean). The simple effect of globalization, though, does not display any statistically significant effect on the variance of the types of democracy, with the sign being positive against expectation. In Model 4, institutional constraints are introduced in isolation. These are primarily seen as a domestic factor conditioning the response to globalization rather than an independent factor, so that a direct effect is not necessarily expected. Still, veto structures could be filtering pressures from other sources than globalization, and should hence in tendency be associated with more variance in the types of democracy. Squarely against these expectations, the results indicate a negative and statistically highly significant effect. Model 5 combines the factors discussed so far into one additive model

to control for their relative distribution. The substantial results change considerably. The effect of globalization turns from positive and insignificant to positive and clearly significant, indicating larger variance in the type of democracy for economically more open systems against expectation. The negative effect of institutional constraints becomes more pronounced. Remarkably, the residual effects of the time dummies turn negative and statistically significant once the whole set of variables is introduced, indicating that these factors, which are causing divergence rather than convergence overall, are positively related to the time periods, and an unexplained trend towards convergence remains after controlling for them. Model 6 presents the results when the indicator for globalization is interacted with that for institutional constraints. The residual trend towards convergence remains largely, even though the coefficient on the dummy for T3 just moves outside conventional levels of statistical significance. The reasoning behind the interaction is that only when globalization *and* few institutional constraints are given, convergence should occur, as otherwise, reform is not required or too costly. The effects reported on globalization and institutional constraints now refer to the situations where the other factor equals zero, as is the rule in interactive models.<sup>11</sup> The constitutive effect on globalization (when there are no veto players) again is rather strong, positive and statistically significant. The constitutive effect of institutional constraints (when globalization is coded zero, given at intermediate levels of globalization) is slightly positive but not statistically significant. Of more interest are the interactive effects. The coefficient on the interactive term is negative and statistically significant. Combining the coefficients on the constitutive terms and on the interactive term generates meaningful marginal effects at different values of the modifying variable, which are displayed in Figures 4 and 5, along with adjusted standard errors (following Brambor et al.

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<sup>11</sup> Institutional constraints range from 0 to 5, so the effect on the globalization variable refers to the effect of globalization when institutional constraints are lowest. Globalization ranges from about -2 to 2.5, so the coefficient on the institutional constraints variables refers to its effect when globalization reaches intermediate levels. See Figures 4 and 5 for the effects of the variables across the whole range of the modifying variables.

2005). The positive effect of globalization becomes smaller with higher institutional constraints, and, for intermediate levels of institutional constraints, becomes and remains statistically insignificant (Figure 4). The effect of institutional constraints turns from positive and statistically insignificant to negative and significant for very high levels of globalization (Figure 5, above). With these results in mind it is possible to briefly reflect upon the broader implications of this paper.

## VI. SO WHAT?

The main finding of this research appears to be that there is no convergence over time on the executives-parties dimension at first sight, rather divergence, against H1. However, after controlling for a whole set of covariates (Models 5 and 6), which cause divergence rather than convergence and are positively related to time (such as globalization), a residual trend towards convergence appears. Hence, there are processes of divergence and convergence working at the same time, which also explains the existence of plausible accounts of both. The Figures in Appendix 1 offer some additional insights into the relationships between types of democracy, globalization and time. While being unable to confirm any simple expectations about the dynamics set out in the beginning, the substantial factors have some impact on the variance of types of political system. To start with, EU membership has a clear negative effect (in line with H3); and it seems that the political systems of the EU member states are converging or at least more similar compared to the rest of the sample. Economic and political factors appear to be influential as well. The hypothesis formulated (H2) expected an interactive relationship between globalization and institutional constraints, with a negative effect of globalization but only when veto players are absent. The results indicate that conversely, globalization has a positive effect on the variance of types of democracy, which is less pronounced for systems with more veto players,

though. Hence, some findings regarding the interaction are in line with the expectations, while others are not. First, globalization and the domestic veto structure appear to affect the variance of political systems systematically. Second, the domestic veto structure filters the effect of globalization. But, the effect of globalization as such seems to be positive rather than negative as expected. This finding supports skeptical views about the coercive impact of globalization e.g. cited by Franzese and Hays (2008: 748) for tax policy research. Similarly, there might be no single ideal answer to globalization in terms of types of democracy or globalization might diffuse a wider variety of system types. Furthermore and also analogically to the taxation literature, domestic factors appear to alter the impact of globalization, in this case, the domestic veto structure curbs the tendency of globalization to cause divergence, in particular in situations of strong globalization.

Several observations run squarely against the hypothesis laid out at the start, including simple convergence over time and the nature of the interaction between globalization and institutional constraints. We expected convergence over time, with substantial explanations capturing part of it, and did not find the former in a pure form and the latter other than expected. Whether these findings are a reason to look for better data or for better theory remains unresolved. For example, more fine-grained data on the political system type, e.g. yearly data, could be helpful. For a start, an analytical framework to study convergence of political system types and some puzzling findings are provided.

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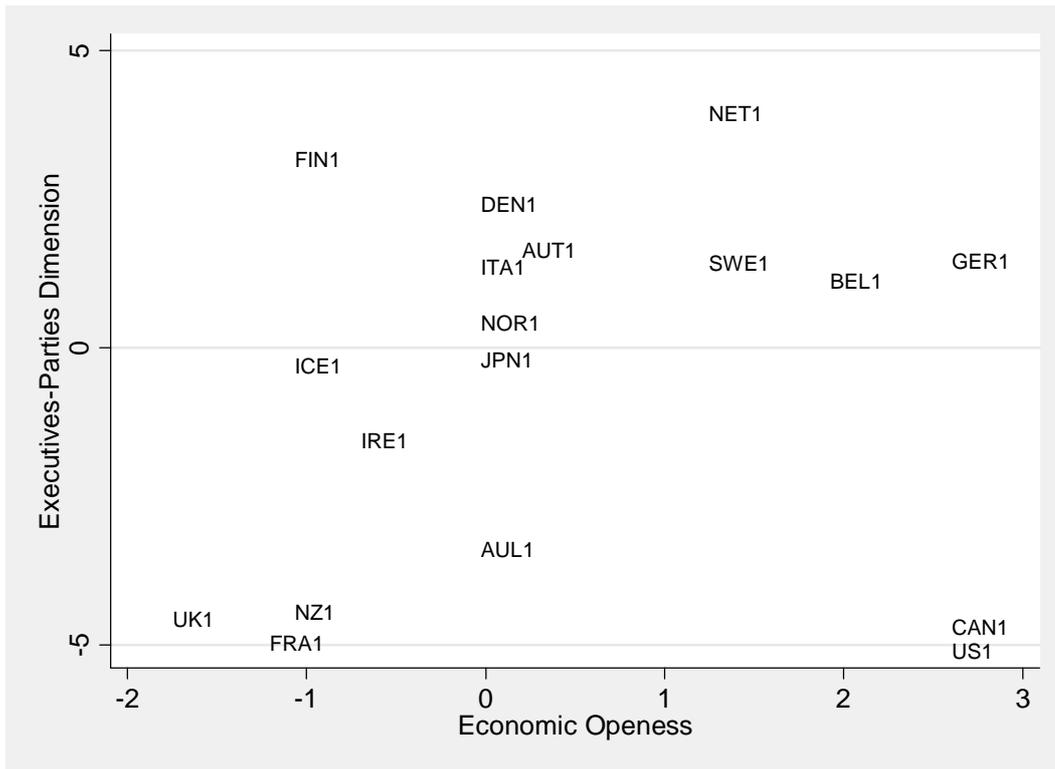
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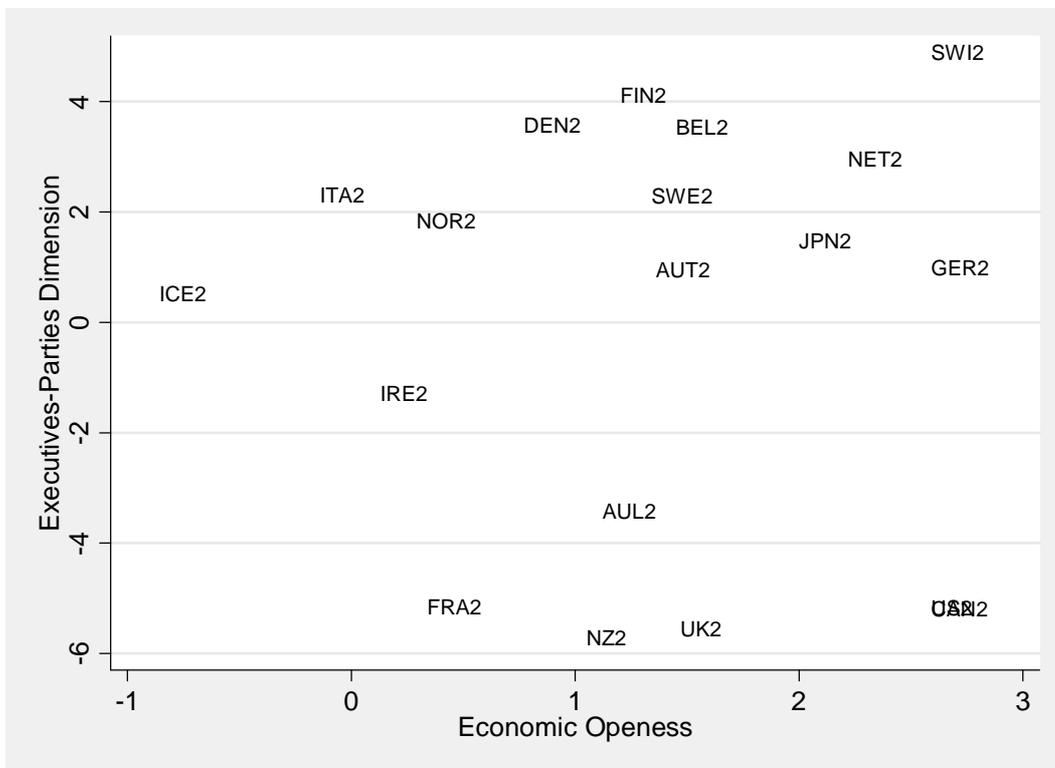
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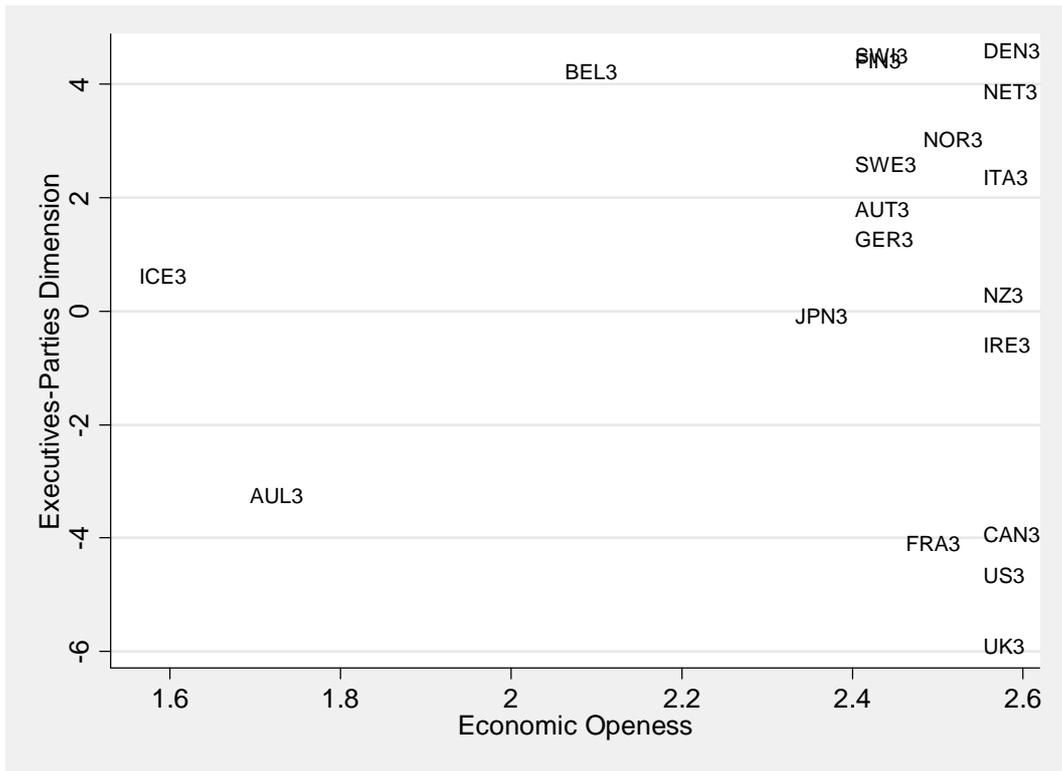
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- Appendix 1: Executive-party dimension scores and globalization for three periods



Period 1 (1945-1970)



Period 2 (1971-1996)



Period 3 (1997-2010)

Appendix 2: Data used in the quantitative analysis (heteroscedastic models)

<i>Country/period</i>	<i>Effect. nr. of part.</i>	<i>Electoral disprop.</i>	<i>Cab. durability</i>	<i>Maj. cab type</i>	<i>Pluralism</i>	<i>Ec. openness</i>	<i>Veto index</i>	<i>EU memb.</i>	<i>Executives-parties</i>
AUS1	2.26	8.27	901	0.78	2.5	-0.09	3	0.00	-3.38
AUS2	2.19	10.15	801	0.79	2.06	1.07	3	0.00	-3.42
AUS3	2.14	11.46	1053	0.67	2	1.68	3	0.00	-3.25
AUT1	2.25	3.61	1036	0.17	0.38	0.14	2	0.00	1.64
AUT2	2.72	1.34	1182	0.61	0.38	1.31	2.08	0.08	0.96
AUT3	3.48	2.2	712	0.5	0.38	2.39	3.83	1.00	1.80
BEL1	3.22	3.26	770	0.44	0.88	1.86	3	0.83	1.11
BEL2	5.49	3.09	683	0.23	1.13	1.4	3.15	1.00	3.53
BEL3	6.4	3.69	788	0.18	1.25	2.05	4	1.00	4.23
CAN1	2.4	11.38	1048	0.78	3.38	2.54	3	0.00	-4.70
CAN2	2.35	12.16	1278	0.88	3.31	2.54	3	0.00	-5.18
CAN3	2.96	10.91	869	0.79	3.13	2.54	3	0.00	-3.94
CHE1	4.85	2.01	1229	0.07	0.63		5	0.00	4.23
CHE2	5.57	2.98	1301	0	0.63	2.54	5	0.00	4.88
CHE3	5.04	2.61	1063	0	0.63	2.39	5	0.00	4.51
DEU1	3.04	3.73	663	0.27	0.88	2.54	5	0.83	1.46
DEU2	2.84	1.48	975	0.48	0.88	2.54	5	1.00	1.01
DEU3	3.58	2.95	1141	0.5	0.88	2.39	5	1.00	1.27
DNK1	3.85	1.88	851	0.36	0.63	-0.09	1	0.00	2.42
DNK2	5.11	1.78	692	0.27	0.88	0.72	1.92	0.92	3.57
DNK3	4.86	0.83	822	0	0.75	2.54	2	1.00	4.60
ESP1						-1.13		0.00	
ESP2	2.76	8.15	1150	0.68	3.13	0.05	1.7	0.42	-3.19
ESP3	2.51	5.42	1239	0.6	3	2.37	3	1.00	-2.46
FIN1	4.91	2.72	364	0.11	1.5	-1.13	0	0.00	3.18
FIN2	5.17	3.17	527	0.08	0.75	1.15	0.08	0.08	4.12
FIN3	5.05	3.12	1110	0	0.63	2.39	2	1.00	4.42
FRA1	3.28	20.73	595	0.61	3.13	-1.27	1	0.83	-4.97
FRA2	3.54	22.57	823	0.67	2.94	0.29	1.15	1.00	-5.14
FRA3	2.69	18.16	789	0.46	2.75	2.45	2	1.00	-4.09
GBR1	2.05	7.15	1184	1	3	-1.81	0	0.00	-4.57
GBR2	2.2	14.66	1189	0.88	3.06	1.42	0.92	0.92	-5.55
GBR3	2.32	16.53	1321	0.92	3	2.54	2	1.00	-5.90
GRE1						-1.13		0.00	
GRE2	2.2	8.08	986	0.78	3.38	-0.91	0.7	0.62	-4.22
GRE3	2.39	7.54	872	1	3	1.77	2	1.00	-4.36
IRL1	2.94	3.73	1219	0.61	2.75	-0.76	1	0.00	-1.57

IRL2	2.76	3.2	986	0.53	2.69	0.08	1.92	0.92	-1.29
IRL3	2.84	7.86	946	0.17	2.38	2.54	2.92	1.00	-0.60
ISL1	3.48	5.37	829	0.42	2.25	-1.13	1	0.00	-0.31
ISL2	4	2.8	832	0.45	2.25	-0.91	1	0.00	0.52
ISL3	3.74	1.96	693	0.44	2.13	1.55	1	0.00	0.62
ISR1	4.94	1.07	741	0.11	0.5			0.00	4.48
ISR2	4.16	3.48	568	0.08	1.13			0.00	2.86
ISR3	7.02	5.24	281	0.11	1.5			0.00	4.45
ITA1	4.51	2.49	456	0.14	3	-0.09	3	0.83	1.37
ITA2	5.22	3.82	415	0.08	2.56	-0.19	3	1.00	2.32
ITA3	5.59	6.99	627	0.13	2	2.54	3.83	1.00	2.37
JPN1	3.45	4.85	611	0.58	1.63	-0.09	2	0.00	-0.20
JPN2	4.07	5.28	897	0.25	1.5	1.95	2	0.00	1.49
JPN3	3.02	12.94	388	0.05	1.38	2.32	3	0.00	-0.08
LUX1	3.08	2.7	1169	0.38	1		2	0.83	1.20
LUX2	3.68	3.93	1669	0.5	0.81		2	1.00	1.23
LUX3	3.92	3.33	1409	0.5	0.88		2.92	1.00	1.48
NLD1	4.83	1.35	913	0.15	0.75	1.18	1	0.83	3.95
NLD2	4.68	1.29	971	0.32	1.06	2.17	1	1.00	2.96
NLD3	5.5	0.97	944	0.29	1	2.54	1.83	1.00	3.87
NOR1	3.12	5.12	1029	0.65	0.38	-0.09	2	0.00	0.41
NOR2	3.61	4.7	816	0.38	0.38	0.24	2	0.00	1.84
NOR3	4.58	3.04	873	0.36	0.38	2.47	2	0.00	3.04
NZL1	1.97	7.98	995	1	2.63	-1.13	0	0.00	-4.44
NZL2	1.96	14.63	1063	0.95	2.75	1	0.31	0.00	-5.70
NZL3	3.32	2.3	642	0.28	2.63	2.54	1	0.00	0.28
PRT1						-1.13		0.00	
PRT2	3.33	4.04	729	0.39	2.63	-0.47	0.62	0.42	-0.43
PRT3	2.72	5.85	893	0.63	2.63	2.47	2	1.00	-2.13
SWE1	3.13	2.4	828	0.55	0.25	1.18	0	0.00	1.42
SWE2	3.52	1.77	855	0.41	0.31	1.29	0.08	0.08	2.30
SWE3	4.22	1.36	1149	0.5	0.38	2.39	1.92	1.00	2.59
USA1	2.39	13.52	1118	0.81	3.25	2.54	5	0.00	-5.11
USA2	2.41	15.19	1114	0.79	3.06	2.54	5	0.00	-5.17
USA3	2.32	11.96	629	0.85	2.88	2.54	5	0.00	-4.65

Sources: See Text and Giuliani (2011).