

## Types of Democracy: Consensus vs Majoritarian

Sample Questions (2020-2023):

1. Does the inclusiveness of consensus democracies lead to polarisation over time? [TT23]
2. What are the costs and benefits of building consensus democracies? [TT22]
3. Can the majoritarian vs consensus distinction tell us anything significant about variations in political outcomes? [LV22]
4. How does the electoral system influence the consensus or majoritarian disposition of a democracy? [TT21]
5. What difference does the separation of powers make? [LV21]

### Category 1: Determinants of Consensus and Majoritarian Democracy

Lijphart's Typology and characteristics of democracy

- Lijphart's definition of democracy
  - Definition captured by maxim "government by the people, for the people"
  - Majoritarianism: during disagreement, the government simply follows the majority
  - Consensus: during disagreement, we follow the will of as many people as possible; majority rule is the minimum requirement
    - Seeks broad participation in government and agreement with minorities
  - Majoritarianism and consensus are organised along this 2 dimensional pattern (Lijphart confirms this through a principal components analysis)

Typology	Underlying Principle
Majoritarian Democracy	The focus is on concentration of power in the hands of a bare-majority and a centralised form of government. There is little dispersion of power due to flexible constitutions etc
Consensus Democracy	Focused on broad-based sharing of power, dispersion of power through decentralised, federalist structure

Executive Parties Dimension

Indicator/Component	Explanation and Examples
<b>Concentration of executive power</b> in single party majority cabinets vs	<b>Majoritarian</b> UK: Cabinet is the most powerful organ; party which has the most number of seats in the House of

executive power-sharing in broad multiparty coalitions

Commons. 2 party system means that 2 parties are approx. equal strength and so it is a narrow majority; a large minority is excluded and vast political power wielded by a narrow majority.

- Since 1945, some exceptions to one party majority cabinets → labour cabinets in 1970s where party won a plurality but not majority so had to form a minority government; relied on other parties not defeating it
- Only example of coalition cabinet is post May 2010 where Conservatives only won a plurality and so to have majority support formed a coalition with the Liberal Democrats where both parties formed a cabinet

New Zealand: Single party majority cabinets from 1935 to 1990s with two large parties – the Labour and National party – dominated politics

- Quasi-coalition cabinet formed after a series of defections occurred in 1993
- All other exceptions formed after New Zealand transitioned to a new non-Westminster system

### **Consensus**

Switzerland and Belgium: The consensus principle is to allow all or most of the important parties share executive power in a broad coalition; the Swiss 7 member national executive (the Federal Council), the 4 parties composed of the executive positions proportionally according to their seat share in the lower house of the legislature. Additional informal power-sharing rule is that the linguistic groups be represented in rough proportion to their sizes: four or five German-speakers, one or two French-speakers and frequently an Italian speaker

The Belgian constitution offers an example of a formal requirement that the executive include representatives of the large linguistic groups. In 1970, the new federal constitution stipulate that “with the possible exception of the Prime Minister, the Council of Ministers [cabinet] includes as many French speaking members as Dutch speaking members”

<p><b>Executive-legislative relationships</b> in which the executive is dominant vs executive-legislative balance of power</p>	<p>UK: Cabinet is dependent on the confidence of the Parliament; since the cabinet contains leaders of the party, it is backed by the majority of the parliament and is dominating the parliament → depends on cohesiveness of the parliament</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During periods of minority government, many important cabinet proposals were defeated in 1970</li> <li>• Unwritten rule that only a vote of no confidence forces resignation of the cabinet rather than defeat on cabinet proposals</li> <li>• Caused by 2 party system</li> </ul> <p>New Zealand: Combination of the parliamentary system + rigidly disciplined two party system made the cabinet predominate over the legislature (cohesive parties) → cabinet was formed by MPs belonging to the majority party and they could rein in their party</p> <p><b>Consensus</b> Switzerland and Belgium: Swiss political system is neither parliamentary nor presidential; the relationship between the executive Federal Council and the legislatures is independence since the Federal Council is independently elected + cannot be subject to a vote of no confidence during the period and need not resign if a Bill is defeated by the parliament → formal separation of powers; Federal Council is powerful but not supreme</p> <p>Belgium has a parliamentary form of government with a cabinet dependent on the confidence of the legislature → but they are often large and uncohesive coalition and not at all dominant and tend to have a “gift-and-take” relationship with their parliament</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often times short lived</li> </ul>
Two-party vs multiparty systems	<p><b>Majoritarian</b> UK: Dominated by 2 parties → labour + conservatives. Other parties which contest elections are not large enough to be impactful. Minor Parties like the Scottish Nationalist Party or the Welsh</p>

	<p>Nationalists never win much more than a handful of seats; Liberal Democrats never won more than 10% of the seats in the House of Commons</p> <p>New Zealand: 2 large parties in complete control of the party system and only these two formed cabinets during the 6 decades from 1935-1993 (Labour and National parties). Third parties were almost absent from the New Zealand House of Representatives (completely so from 1946 to 1993)</p> <p><b>Consensus</b>  Switzerland and Belgium: Both have multiparty systems with no party coming close to a majority status → Switzerland has 4 major parties; Belgium's 3 major parties split along linguistic lines and several new linguistic parties have gained prominence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Reason for this is that Switzerland and Belgium are extremely plural societies divided along religious, class and linguistic lines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Linguistic for Belgium; Religious for Switzerland</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Reason also is electoral system</li> </ul>
<p>Majoritarian and <b>disproportional</b> electoral systems vs <b>proportional</b> representation</p>	<p><b>Majoritarian</b>  UK: MPs are elected to the House of Commons in single-member districts according to the plurality method called first past the post system: the candidate wins with either the majority or largest minority vote.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Disproportionality: In 2005, the Labour party won the absolute parliamentary majority of 355/646 seats with only 35.2% of the popular vote</li> <li>● In all elections between 1974 and 2005, the winning party with the majority seat share never won more than 44% of the popular vote</li> <li>● Winner than failed to win even a plurality: Conservatives won a clear seat majority in 1951 with however votes than the labour party had received</li> <li>● The logic: The winning party can win most seats with 51% of the population in each district, while the losing party can win fewer districts with a much higher vote share of</li> </ul>

80%

- Particularly disadvantageous to small parties such as the Liberal Democrats because while 20% of the population could support them, if these 20% are spread evenly throughout the UK, they would never win a single seat
- Movement towards Proportional representation in Northern Ireland since the 1970s and regional assemblies in Wales and Scotland

New Zealand: House of Representatives elected by plurality method in single-member districts; deviation was in the four special large districts, geographically overlapping with the regular smaller districts, reserved for the Maori minority (12% of the population) → deviation from Westminster model because aim was to guarantee minority represented.

- Disproportionality: In the 1978 election, the National party won a clear majority of 50/92 seats even though it won neither a majority nor plurality (only 39.8%) and the Labour's popular vote was 40.4%. The Social Credit party's 17.1% of the vote only gave rise to 1 seat

Adoption of PR in 1996: 65 members were elected by plurality in single member districts and 55 members by PR from party lists. Second set of 55 seats had to be allocated to parties in a way that made "the overall result as proportional as possible" → New Zealand uses the term "mixed member proportional" even though it is now a fully PR system

- Effects: first election much more proportional. National Party still overrepresented but by less than 3% (won 33.8% of the vote but occupied 36.7% of the seats). Second election produced a multiparty system with unprecedented 6 parties gaining representation + no party won a majority of the seats so it led to the development of a 2 party coalition cabinet between the National and New Zealand First Parties; subsequent cabinets were minority coalition and single party

**Consensus**

	Switzerland and Belgium: Their proportional representation systems (for both their lower houses) explain the translation of societal cleavages into party-system cleavages
<p><b>Pluralist</b> interest group systems with <b>free-for-all competition</b> among groups vs <b>coordinated and “corporatist”</b> interest group systems aimed at <b>compromise</b> and concertation</p>	<p><b>Majoritarian</b></p> <p>UK: By concentrating power in the hands of the majority, the Westminster model sets up a government-vs-opposition pattern that is competitive and adversarial. Interest group system characterised by competition and conflict: a system of free-for-all pluralism where there is no concertation or the development of pacts between interest groups → they exert pressure on the government in an uncoordinated and competitive manner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grim confrontations between Margaret Thatcher’s government and the labour unions with no attempted coordination</li> </ul> <p>New Zealand: High strike levels which are indicative of confrontation instead of concertation between labour and management → all scholars agree that UK and NZ belong on the extreme pluralist end of the pluralist-corporatist spectrum</p> <p><b>Consensus</b></p> <p>Switzerland and Belgium: Some disagreement about the degree of corporatism in Switzerland and Belgium because the labour unions tend to be less well-organised and less influential than businesses. But if we consider liberal corporatism (business), then Switzerland and Belgium exhibit clear traits of corporatist systems → tripartite concertation, relatively free and relatively large interest groups, and the prominence of peak associations</p>

The relationship between the different components of the executives parties dimension (is there a logical link between one component with another?)

- Easy to see how a proportional electoral system goes with a multiparty system which in turn necessitates the formation of coalition cabinets that require the support of parliamentary majority to stay in power
  - Majoritarian electoral systems reward big parties, frequently manufacturing a majority for the plurality party

## Federal-Unitary Dimension

Indicator/Component	Explanation and Examples
<p><b>Unitary and centralised</b> government vs <b>federal and decentralised</b> government</p>	<p><b>Majoritarian</b>  UK: Highly unitary and centralised → local governments are creatures of the central government with no constitutionally backed powers + financially dependent. There are no clearly designated geographical and functional areas from which the cabinet and central government are barred.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exceptions: Northern Ireland was ruled by its own parliament and cabinet with much autonomy from 1921 to 1972 which was eliminated by Parliament through simple majority decision</li> <li>• Exceptions: Gradual movement/"devolution" towards greater autonomy of Scotland and Wales → 1997 referendums led to creation of autonomous and directly elected Scottish and Welsh Assemblies</li> </ul> <p>New Zealand: Unitary and centralised because population is only 4 million</p> <p><b>Consensus</b>  Switzerland and Belgium: Switzerland is a federal system where power is divided between the central government and the government of 20 cantons and 6 so called half cantons → each canton has 2 representatives (1 for half canton) in the Swiss Federal Chamber</p> <p>Belgium was a unitary and centralised states but moved towards federalism and decentralisation consisting of three geographically defined regions and 3 non-geographically defined cultural communities along linguistic lines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Main reason for the two layer system was that the bilingual area of Brussels has a large majority of French Speakers but is surrounded by Dutch speaking Flanders</li> </ul>

<p>Concentration of legislative power:  <b>Concentration of legislative power</b>  in a unicameral legislature vs  <b>division of legislative power</b>  between two equally strong but  constituted houses</p>	<p><b>Majoritarian</b>  UK: Deviates slightly from unicameral legislature with the House of Commons and Lords but the 1999 House of Lords act removed all but 92 hereditary peers and appointed members now form an overwhelming majority of the House of Lord. Relationship between the House of Commons and House of Lords is asymmetrical: the only power the House of Lords has is to delay legislation bills (money bills for one month and all other bills for a year). So does not deviate much from unicameral legislature</p> <p>New Zealand: New Zealand had a bicameral legislature with an elected lower house and appointed upper house but the upper house gradually lost power. In 1950, it became a unicameral legislature</p> <p><b>Consensus</b>  Switzerland and Belgium: Principal justification for instituting a bicameral instead of a unicameral legislature is to give special representation to minorities including smaller states in federal systems (upper house)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2 conditions for there to actually be minority representation: (i) the upper house has to be elected on a different basis from the lower house + (ii) the upper house must have real power</li> <li>• Swiss system fulfils this → Council of States (upper house) has two representatives for each canton and 1 for half canton → symmetrical power for both the Upper and Lower Houses</li> <li>• Belgium both chambers of parliament (Senate + Chamber of Representatives) have virtually equal power and the Senate is independently elected and especially represents the two culturally-linguistic groups → but no overrepresented; still very proportional</li> </ul>
<p><b>Flexible constitutions</b> that can be amended by simple majorities vs</p>	<p><b>Majoritarian</b>  UK: Unwritten constitution; no document to specify the powers and composition of the government and</p>



<p><b>rigid constitutions</b> that can be changed only by extraordinary majorities</p>	<p>rights of citizens; defined by basic laws like the Magna Carta of 1215, the Bill of Rights of 1689 and the Parliament Acts of 1911 and 1949</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwritten constitution makes the constitution extremely flexible because it can be changed by the Parliament through simple majority vote (like other laws)</li> </ul> <p>New Zealand: Lacks a single written constitutional document → unwritten constitution consists of a number of basic laws like the Constitution Acts of 1852 and 1986, the Bill of Rights Act of 1990 etc; some key provisions of the basic laws are “entrenched” and can only be changed by <math>\frac{3}{4}</math> majorities in the House of Representatives or a majority vote by referendum. However, such entrenchment can be removed by simple majorities, so in the end, the majorities prevails. So, the parliament is sovereign in New Zealand</p> <p><b>Consensus</b> Switzerland and Belgium: Both have a written constitution and can only be changed by a special majority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Switzerland: Majority in nationwide referendum + majorities in majority of the cantons</li> <li>• Belgium: All constitutional amendments require <math>\frac{2}{3}</math> of the house vote in both chambers + laws pertaining to the organisation and powers of the communities and regions have a semi-constitutional status and are even harder to change because they also require majorities in both the Dutch and French speaking groups</li> </ul>
<p>Systems in which legislatures have the <b>final word on the constitutionality</b> of their own legislation vs systems in which laws are <b>subject to a judicial review</b> of their constitutionality by supreme or constitutional courts</p>	<p><b>Majoritarian</b> UK: Absence of judicial view because there is no constitutional document with the status of a ‘higher law’ against which the courts can test the constitutionality of regular legislation → Parliament does normally feel bound by the rules of unwritten constitution but not formally → it is Parliamentary majority that is the ultimate sovereign authority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only exception was when Britain entered the European Community and had to accept</li> </ul>

	<p>some of its laws and institutions as higher authorities with regards to several areas of policy + judicial review for both European and British courts</p> <p>New Zealand: Courts do not have the right to judicial review due to Parliamentary sovereignty</p> <p><b>Consensus</b> Switzerland and Belgium: Switzerland deviates in one respect – its supreme court, the Federal Tribunal does not have the right of judicial review + no judicial review in Belgium either until 1984 when the new Court of Arbitration was inaugurated → main responsibility was the interpretation of the constitutional provisions concerning the separation of powers among the central, community and regional governments + authority greatly expanded by the constitutional revision of 1988</p>
Central banks that are <b>dependent</b> on the executive vs <b>independent</b> central banks	<p><b>Majoritarian</b> UK: Central bank not independent and controlled/influenced by the cabinet; only in 1997 was the Bank of England given the power to autonomously set interest rates</p> <p>New Zealand: No independence; Busch gives New Zealand the lowest rating of central bank independence; Reserve Bank Act of 1989 increased independence</p> <p><b>Consensus</b> Switzerland and Belgium: Switzerland's CB is regarded as one of the strongest and most independent central banks + Belgium's substantially reinforced in the 1990s</p>

Examples of both types of democracies

Majoritarian

Country	Special Deviations
New Zealand	

United Kingdom	
Barbados	<p>Most former colonies of the UK have adopted a “Westminster adapted” system → deviate mostly in the federal-unitary dimension from most majoritarian democracies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a unitary and centralised form of government due to its small nature but has a bicameral legislature and has a written, rigid constitution + strong central bank</li> </ul>

### Consensus

Country	Special Deviations

## Category 2: Merits and Defects of Consensus and Majoritarian Democracy

### *Theoretical Benefits of Consensus and Majoritarian Democracy*

Benefit/Defect of [Type of Democracy]	Theoretical Benefit
Pros of Majoritarianism: Decisiveness	<p>The predominant benefit ascribed to majoritarianism is its decisiveness and effectiveness in policymaking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This can be explained via what Lijphart calls “Lowell’s axiom” where clear and decisive single-party majority cabinets wield almost supreme legislative power logically results in organised and decisive policy making.</li> </ul> <p>However, two things may be contested regarding majoritarian decisiveness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The first is that decisiveness has no bearing on the quality of the policy, with the disastrous “poll-tax” by the 1980 British government being a clear example, and we are mainly concerned with tangible macroeconomic benefits manifesting from government policy.</li> <li>The second is that coherent policies may be</li> </ul>

	<p>“negated by the alternation of these governments” especially when the governments are formed by opposite ends of the political spectrum. So, the main theoretical benefit of majoritarianism is highly contested.</p>
Cons of Majoritarianism: Inclusivity	<p>The winner-take-all nature of majoritarian democracies, promoted by its single-party majority cabinets and its first-past-the-post system, often leads to the exclusion of minority interests from political decision making. Pressing the point further, majoritarian democracies incentivise parties to focus on homogenous groups rather than broad coalitions to maximise their chance of success in a winner-take-all scenario, exacerbating social divisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Because majoritarianism creates an environment where only the loudest voice prevails, the quality of discourse and deliberation deteriorates, inciting a more competitive political culture.</li> </ul>
Pros of Consensus: Inclusivity	<p>In virtue of consensus democracy promoting inclusivity via power-sharing through coalition cabinets, proportional representation, it forms a “kinder and gentler” democracy capable of representing the diversity of interests and individuals more accurately. Consensus democracy creates an environment where the quality of discourse and debate in democracy is higher, precisely because it includes more voices</p>
Cons of Consensus: Indecisiveness	<p>Opposite of majoritarianism</p>

### *Empirical Verification of Consensus and Majoritarian Democracy*

Measures used by Lijphart

Conceptualisation of benefits	Measures
Governmental Outcomes: governmental quality/Economic performance	<p>Statistically significant positive effects are <b>bolded</b>; statistically significant negative effects are <i>italicised</i></p> <p>Governmental quality (Worldwide Governance Indicators): <b>Government effectiveness</b>; regulatory</p>

	<p>quality; <b>rule of law; control of corruption; corruption perceptions index</b></p> <p>Economic performance: GDP/capita growth; <b>Consumer Price index; GDP deflator; unemployment; budget balance</b></p> <p>Misc: Heritage Foundation freedom index; Fraser Institute freedom index</p> <p>Federal-unitary has no statistically significant effects</p> <p>Implication: Lijphart's analysis turns conventional wisdom on its head regarding the merits of majoritarian democracies: on almost all indicators regarding both policy-effectiveness and the quality of democracy, consensus democracies fare better than majoritarian ones. Further, consensus democracies find themselves, at worst, on par with majoritarian democracies in having no effect on GDP/capita growth or unemployment</p>
Kinder, Gentler Democracy: quality of democracy	<p>All effects considered statistically significant and positive</p> <p>Quality of Democracy: Voice and accountability; EIU Democracy Index (Electoral process and pluralism, Functioning of the government, political participation, political culture, civil liberties)</p> <p>Inclusivity and inequality: Women's parliamentary representation, Women's cabinet representation, Gender inequality index; Richest 10%/Poorest 10% ratio; Richest 20%/Poorest 20%; Gini Index of inequality</p> <p>Satisfaction with Democracy: Voter turnout; non-mandatory voter turn-out; satisfaction with democracy</p> <p>Federal-unitary dimension no statistically significant effect</p>

Overview of the studies regarding the effects of consensus-majoritarian democracies

**Table 2. Democratic Performance and Consensus Democracy**

Author	Dependent Variable	Findings	Method
Lijphart (2012)	Government effectiveness	Positive	Multivariate statistical analysis (N=36)
	Rule of law	Positive	
	Control of corruption	Positive	
	Corruption perception index	Positive	
	Consumer price index	Positive	
	GDP deflator	Positive	
	Political stability and absence of violence	Positive	
	Internal conflict risk	Positive	
	Weighted domestic conflict risk	Positive	
	Deaths from domestic terrorism	Positive	
	Voice and accountability	Positive	
	Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) democracy index	Positive	
	EIU electoral process and pluralism	Positive	

Author	Dependent Variable	Findings	Method
	EIU functioning of government	Positive	
	EIU political participation	Positive	
	EIU political culture	Positive	
	EIU civil liberties	Positive	
	Women's parliamentary representation	Positive	
	Women's cabinet representation	Positive	
	Gender inequality index	Positive	
	Richest-poorest 10% ratio	Positive	
	Richest-poorest 20% ratio	Positive	
	Gini index of inequality	Positive	
	Net public and publicly mandated social expenditure	Positive	
	Environmental performance index	Positive	
	Incarceration	Positive	
	Death penalty	Positive	

Author	Dependent Variable	Findings	Method
	<b>Aid versus defense</b>	<b>Positive</b>	
	<b>Foreign aid</b>	<b>Weakly positive</b>	
	<b>Satisfaction with democracy</b>	<b>Weakly positive</b>	
	<b>Voter turnout</b>	<b>Weakly positive</b>	
	Unemployment	Positive/No effect (depending on period)	
	Regulatory quality	No effect	
	GDP per capita growth	No effect	
	Budget balance	No effect	
	Heritage Foundation Freedom Index	No effect	
	Fraser Institute Freedom Index	No effect	
<b>Lappi-Seppälä (2008)</b>	<b>Imprisonment rate</b>	<b>Positive</b>	Bivariate (N=16)
<b>Green (2007)</b>	<b>Penal culture</b>	<b>Positive</b>	Paired comparison
<b>Qvortrup and Lijphart (2013)</b>	<b>Domestic terrorism</b>	<b>Positive</b>	Multivariate (N=36)

Author	Dependent Variable	Findings	Method
<b>Crepaz (1998)</b>	<b>Welfare expenditure</b>	<b>Positive</b>	Multivariate (N=18)
<b>Birchfield and Crepaz (1998)</b>	<b>Income share of richest 20% of population</b>	<b>Positive</b>	Multivariate (N=38, 18 countries, two time points)
<b>Hays (2003)</b>	<b>Labor-capital tax differential</b>	<b>Positive</b>	Bivariate (N=17)
<b>Kovras and Loizides (2014)</b>	<b>Deepening of economic and political crisis</b>	<b>Positive</b>	Qualitative four-country study, with focus on one case
<b>Pennings (2003)</b>	<b>Constitutional control of the executive</b>	<b>Positive</b>	QCA (N=45)
<b>Tavits (2004)</b>	<b>Size of government (outlays and revenue)</b>	<b>Positive</b>	Multivariate (N=40)
<b>Steiner et al. (2005)</b>	<b>Parliamentary discourse quality</b>	<b>Positive</b>	Discourse analysis in three countries
<b>Anderson and Guillory (1997)</b>	<b>Satisfaction with democracy among winners and losers</b>	<b>Positive</b>	Multivariate, pooled model (N=8,116)
<b>Doorenspleet and Pellikaan (2013)</b>	<b>Six World Bank governance indicators</b>	<b>Positive</b>	Anova (N=98); pairwise comparison of means
<b>Ozomy and Rey (2013)</b>	<b>National environmental performance</b>	<b>Positive</b>	Multivariate (N=21)
<b>Crepaz (1998)</b>	<b>Popular cabinet support</b>	<b>Positive</b>	Bivariate (N=18)

Author	Dependent Variable	Findings	Method
Crepaz (1996)	Unemployment, inflation, working days lost, economic growth	Positive or no effect	Multivariate (N=162); nine elections in 18 countries
Fitzgerald and Curtis (2012)	Parental partisan disagreement on political interest of children	Difference demonstrated	Three-country comparison
Bernauer et al. (2016)	Four democracy barometer indicators (Government capability, transparency, participation, and representation)	Three positive, one negative (transparency)	Multivariate (N=33)
Roller (2005)	General effectiveness	Positive	Multivariate (N=17)
	Environmental policy	Mixed	
	Social policy	Mixed	
	Economic policy	No effect	
	Domestic security	No effect	
Poloni-Staudinger (2008)	Environmental effectiveness	Mixed	Multivariate (N=23).
Giuliani (2016)**	Six macroeconomic indicators (from Lijphart, 2012)	Positive in only one, no effect in other five	Multivariate (N=36)
	Government effectiveness	Depends on other factors	QCA (N=19)

Author	Dependent Variable	Findings	Method
	Six World Bank governance indicators (from Lijphart, 2012)	No effect	Multivariate (N=36)
Scruggs (1999)*	Environmental performance	No effect	Multivariate (N=17)
Lewin et al. (2008)	Disability care	No effect	Multivariate (N=274–289, Swedish local governments)
Croissant (2011)	Democratic consolidation	No effect	Qualitative (N=5)
Vis et al. (2012)	Economic performance	No effect	QCA (N=19)
Volkens and Merz (2015)	Quality of election manifestos	No effect	Comparison of mean scores (N=21)
Anderson (2001)**	Unemployment, <i>inflation</i>	No effect, <i>negative</i>	Multivariate (N=18)
Van der Meer et al. (2009)	Six forms of political participation	No effect, <i>negative</i>	Multilevel modeling (20 countries, 27 elections, 47,902 respondents)
Andeweg (2001)	<i>Vote for extreme-right parties</i>	<i>Negative</i>	Cross-tabulation (N=12)
Hakhverdian and Koop (2007)	<i>Vote for populist parties</i>	<i>Negative</i>	Bivariate (N=19)
Schlicht-Schmälzle and Möller (2012)	<i>Educational inequality between migrants and natives</i>	<i>Negative</i>	Multivariate

Notes:

### Summative analysis:

At first glance, Lijphart’s analysis turns conventional wisdom on its head regarding the merits of majoritarian democracies: on almost all indicators regarding both policy-effectiveness and the quality of democracy, consensus democracies fare better than majoritarian ones. Further, consensus democracies find themselves, at worst, on par with majoritarian democracies in having no effect on GDP/capita growth or unemployment.



However, certain results are more tentative regarding consensus democracy's actual effect on outcomes. For one, Giuliani finds no statistically significant effect in 5 out of the 6 macroeconomic indicators used by Lijphart, and further posit that government effectiveness depends on "corporatism in relatively small countries". More importantly, Lijphart only finds a statistically significant relationship between the executive-parties dimension and the respective effects, and not for the federal-unitary dimension. However, in examining the effects of consensus democracy on immigration integration policy, Manatschal & Bernauer found a "Janus-face effect" in that "proportional power dispersion" (executive-parties dimension) produced opposite effects to "representative-veto players dispersion" (federal-unitary dimension) – the decentralised aspect of consensus democracy promoted exclusionary policies while its proportional representation aspect promoted inclusive policies. These "tensions between democracy's dimensions" further appear in studies by Scruggs and Ozyymy and Rey, where there are "statistically significant contradictory effects of the dimensions on one or more environmental variables".

*Is Consensus Democracy really weakly dominant or pareto-superior to Majoritarian Democracy?*

Janus-faced effects: depends on the dimension of consensus democracy

- Theoretical conflicts between the federal-unitary and executive-parties dimension: Birchfield and Crepaz's distinction between collective and competitive veto points
  - Birchfield and Crepaz (1998) uses the distinction between "competitive" and "collective" points where competitive veto points "occur when different political actors operate through separate institutions with mutual veto powers, such as federalism, strong bicameralism, and presidential government" and collective veto points "emerge from institutions where different political actors operate on the same body" such as proportional electoral systems, multiparty legislatures, multiparty governments
  - Competitive veto points are predicted to result in deadlock and immobilism, whereas collective veto points are expected to produce responsive policies, compromise, negotiation, and goal-oriented policymaking since collective veto points enable closer, and more personal, interaction of political actors, collective agency, and shared responsibility
  - **Effects:** Collective veto points lower income inequality whereas competitive veto points are associated with higher income inequality while Crepaz and Moser (2004) find that collective veto points are positively associated with government consumption as percentage of GDP and competitive veto points are negatively associated
  - **Implications for Lijphart's Typology:** McGann and Latner (2012) classify democracies instead on the basis of two criteria: the number of veto players (majoritarian vs supermajoritarian) and the type of electoral system (proportional vs majoritarian)

- They find that the combination of PR and majority rule allows for high flexibility in terms of government spending, as well as the expansion and retrenchment of welfare states
- Janus-faced effects regarding policies for integrating migrants (Bernauer and Manatschal)
  - They hypothesise that representative veto power dispersion (federalism) leads to more exclusive immigrant policies
    - Unlike traditional ethnic minorities, immigrants generally represent no territorial minorities (Bloemraad 2013); accordingly, the conventional channels of interest representation for territorial or autochthonous minorities cannot be used, leading to less representation and protection in federal countries → worsened when they have to compete with other minority interests for consideration in national-policy making arena in federal and decentralised countries
    - Unitary and centralised states, by contrast, might do a better job in representative the population's interests in a comprehensive and inclusive manner
      - Gerring suggests that proportional-centralist systems bring together diverse groups and perspectives to a common meeting-ground under conditions of voluntary choice
  - They also hypothesise that proportional power dispersion leads to more inclusive immigrant integration policies
    - Intuitive because unlike FPTP systems, because migrants tend to take up a minority of any voting pool, some of them will still be represented under a proportional representation system
    - Their interests would be represented
  - Results support the expectation that democracy provides Janus-faced incentive structures
    - Follows a cross-sectional analysis and Bayesian regression of MIPLEX scores of the dimensions of power dispersion
    - In line with the hypotheses, proportional power dispersion tends to yield more inclusive integration policies, while representative veto power dispersion leads to more exclusion → the federal-unitary dimension conflicts with the executive-party dimension
  - Discussion
    - Unifies capturing power dispersion in terms of executive and parties as well as regimes of representative-democratic and direct-democratic veto players
    - Conflicting tendencies between patterns of democracies: While proportional power dispersion expands state intervention, direct democratic and federalist veto structures curb public policy with

respect to migration policies → the dispersion of powers in different ways (executive parties vs veto-players) affect inclusivity of migration policy in opposite directions

- Are more inclusive migration policies better?
  - Because equal treatment of all members of a state and equal access to political participation are fundamental premises of democratic theory (Dahl 1989), the quality of 'multicultural democracy' depends on the political inclusion and participation of immigrants
  - Consensus democracies are only kinder and gentler along one dimension of proportional power dispersion while a contrary finding is obtained for direct and representative-veto power dispersion
    - Immigrants are less protected and represented in federal countries than traditional minorities (Linder 2011)

#### Inclusion of extremist ideologies

- Right-wing extremism
  - Andeweg (2001) observes an empirical correlation of consensus democracy and electoral support for the extreme right.
  - The logical explanation is that the inclusiveness of consensus democracies will provoke a reaction from the "outsiders" against the "insiders" or the establishment, and that the real or perceived lack of choice and lack of accountability that are typical for consensus democracies will force dissatisfied voters to the extremes, as only these parties provide a real alternative to the "establishment"
  - Lijphart (2001) thinks that it is because proportional representation offers small right-wing parties to get elected, but that extreme right-wingism has simply become more popular across Europe (Bogaards, 2015) and now with Trump.
- Migrant-native educational inequality
  - Goes against "kinder and gentler" notion because "consensual patterns of democracy should balance the interests of immigrants and natives in the political decision-making process" (Schlicht-Schmalzle and Moller)
  - But have no idea why

### Category 3: The Conceptual Validity of the Consensus-Majoritarian Typology

*Absence of causal mechanisms linking consensus democracy to its purported benefits*

Correlation is not causation

- General problem linking type of democracy to outcome variables
  - Clearly in Lijphart: While consensus democracies may be more stable and that policymaking is more inclusive, Lijphart fails to explain how this should

translate into lower unemployment or more development aid → he does not develop a theory linking types of democracy to outcomes

- Lijphart also does not attempt to explain why only one dimension of democracy accounts for political variations in outcomes
- Even for benefits of majoritarianism: Schlicht-Schmalzle and Moller writes “we do not know how majoritarian political institutions affect immigrants’ educational success”
- Another problem may be the failure of logical links within the dimensions themselves
  - Keman and Pennings, Taagepera, Roller and Giuliani fail to see how there is a logical and theoretical connection between corporatism and other four features of the first dimension
    - It is easy to see how labour unions may remain confrontational even when in consensus democracies and vice versa → their conciliatory or confrontational attitudes seem independent of the democratic system
  - More problematic is that the correlations between various features of democracies are much lower (Fortin, Croissant and Schachter) raising questions about the coherence of Lijphart’s typology beyond the 36 countries
    - Lijphart also admits the fading discriminatory power of central bank independence as most countries around the world begin adopting bills to preserve central bank independence

Relationship between direct/deliberative democracies and institutional contexts (Geissel and Michels)

- Theoretical arguments and hypothesis
  - Majoritarian democracies focus on concentrating power → ‘aggregating votes’ as the main mechanism of decision making in majoritarian systems create clear winners, the respective majority, is identical with the logic of direct democracy → direct democracy fits better with the logic of majoritarian democracy
  - Steiner et al assumed that consensus oriented institutions go hand in hand with an orientation towards deliberation → culture aspect of power sharing theory and that such power sharing permeates institutions as well as behaviours of people; democracies that have consensus oriented institutional settings most likely also apply behavioural mechanisms of cooperation, moderation, compromise and accommodation, negotiation etc i.e. the crucial principles of deliberation
    - Consensus democracy and deliberation are considered as connected conceptually
  - Geissel and Michels are interested in participatory developments with citizens, not just on representatives
- Results: no evident pattern for both consensus and majoritarian democracies

- Consensus democracies do not score especially high on public deliberation, nor do they score especially low on direct democracy
- No pattern within consensus democracy → Netherlands is neither deliberative nor direct democratic, Denmark is strong in both, Czech Republic is relatively strong regarding direct democracy but weak regarding deliberation + Switzerland is the forerunner in terms of both public deliberation and direct democracy
- Majoritarian countries also do not stand out when it comes to direct democracy: Mexico is neither very direct democratic nor deliberative, France, Spain and the UK are very strong considering deliberative democracy but moderate for direct democracy, or moderately strong in both (Australia). Only Hungary is expectedly strong in direct democracy but weak in public deliberation
- Implications: consensus democracies do not necessarily tend to solve their political issues in a more deliberative way and majoritarian democracies are not necessarily inclined to make decisions via aggregation of votes in referenda
  - Level of direct and deliberative democracy in a country cannot be linked to the institutional settings identified by Lijphart → neither typically majoritarian nor typically consensual
  - What does this mean for our typology? → democratic culture need not necessarily be coherent with institutional contexts

*Is the typology valid when there are no real-world examples of majoritarian democracies?*

Concept-stretching of majoritarian democracies

Russell and Serban's basic point is that there are no defining core characteristics of majoritarianism or the "Westminster" model of democracy

Defining the Westminster Model

- Used to describe countries influenced by the British system
  - Mackintosh (1970) said it described "the idealised version of British government in the 1880-1914 period" but suggested that even then it had been an imperfect descriptor, while subsequent changes meant it had developed significant ability to 'mislead'
- Lijphart used it interchangeably with "majoritarian democracy"
- Needs to have a specific, context independent meaning (no interpretation) for positivists to draw generalised conclusions
- Sartori's requirements for concepts in political science: conceptual 'travelling' across time and space and conceptual 'stretching' to enable a concept to remain relevant to increasingly disparate cases
  - Extension (the objects it denotes) vs intension (the collection of properties which determine the things to which the term applies)
    - Expanding extension can put the intension under strain

- Sartori was interested in classical categorisation, “in which the relation among categories is understood in terms of a taxonomic hierarchy of successively more general categories” → this is contrary to the “family resemblance” idea where there is no unifying set of properties; classical categories requires such a unifying, necessary set
- Russell finds that there is a lack of clear definitions in many non-UK texts, suggesting that comparativists frequently assume the Westminster model to have a well-understood meaning
  - Some texts, representing 30% of the overall total, offered no definition at all
  - The most significant group are texts with ‘implicit’ definitions where the Westminster model was “mentioned in combination with certain attributes or consequences, without clearly indicating that these contributed to its definition”
  - Explicit definitions were often partial and cross-referenced
- Definition given to Westminster model (Intension: attributes given)
  - Extreme diverse (though some are interlinked like two-party system and single-party majority government)
    - First-past-the-post electoral system to neutral civil service
  - The most intuitive definition of the parliamentary system was not the most frequently mentioned attribute for texts that fully and explicitly mentioned as part of the definition → may be because people just assume that Westminster model is the archetypal parliamentary system
  - There is no single attribute which authors explicitly agree characterises the Westminster model but narrowly won by first-past-the-post – cited in just under a third of all texts

#### Consistency of the definition

- Extension: where is the Westminster model thought to apply?
  - UK at 196 texts followed by Canada (77), Australia (67), New Zealand (67)
  - Almost all of them are Commonwealth members and suggests a common linkage of shared cultural history
- UK has been increasingly an imperfect fit due to ‘quasi-federalism’, stronger bicameralism and greater judicialisation while the 2010 election resulted in a coalition government, ending the period of single-party government that had been uninterrupted since 1945
  - Territorial devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, partial reform of the House of Lords, and the Introduction of a Human Rights Act
  - UK had moved away from the Westminster Model
- New Zealand now regarded as the best model – clear contraction of power, being unitary since 1952, unicameral

- However, its FPTP system ended in 1993, with a move to the Mixed Member Proportional system, which had knock on effects for the composition of parliament, and in turn, New Zealand governments
- Most countries violate at least one further expectation → UK itself reliably demonstrates only 4 of the key six attributes, while most other cases reliably demonstrate no more than 3

#### Relevance of the Westminster Model

- Westminster Model label almost always because of heritage → so deviations cannot shed the label
  - Closer to family resemblance?
- Consider Westminster Model as more of a hybrid → Thompson (1980) coined the term 'Washminster' to describe the fusion between the Westminster parliamentary elements and the US government in DC with a strongly elected Senate

#### Implication on the typology

- May undermine the regression when there are fewer true majoritarian examples because then most countries may cluster towards consensus democracies
- Does not undermine the conceptual validity of the typology: I do not think that Lijphart intends for majoritarianism to depend on real-world examples → but rather, majoritarianism can be defined conceptually in terms of the democratic structures which lead to power-concentration instead of power sharing
  - Therefore, all institutions which contribute to this is constitutive of a majoritarian democracy

*Is the entire underlying structure of consensus-majoritarian democracies responsible for the variations of political outcomes? Or are only specific aspects of the consensus-majoritarian typology responsible?*

Janus-faced effects (see above)

More effective models of democracy which incorporate different aspects of majoritarian and consensus democracies

- **Gerring and Thacker (2008) "Centripetalism vs Decentralism"**: Centripetalism is defined as unitary, few veto points, PR and parliamentary vs decentralism (federal, presidential, plurality or preferential vote electoral systems, and more veto points). Centripetalism often outperformed decentralism (Colomer, 2001); however, it groups elements of both types together under the heading of "pluralist institutional formulas" and shows that the combination of PR, parliamentary form of government, and decentralised, bicameral federalism is better at satisfying citizen's demands and produces higher social utility

- **McGann and Latner's "Hybrid Model"**: Their Hybrid Model found that the combination of Proportional Representation and Majority Rule allows for high flexibility in terms of government spending, as well as expansion and retrenchment of welfare states
- **Implications for Lijphart's Typology**: Clearly, a mixture of consensual and majoritarian characteristics do also produce favourable outcomes; it is less so that consensus as a category outperforms majoritarianism, but that particular attributes produces its favorability
  - If the two dimensions of consensus democracy have different consequences, then any measure that combines the two risks yielding inconclusive results as the contradictory effects of power-sharing and dividing institutions cancel each other out
  - This might explain why Scruggs (1999) finds no relationship between consensus democracy and environmental performance; results from Poloni-Staudinger (2008) and Ozymy and Rey (2013) point in the same direction, as both studies report statistically significant contradictory effects of the dimensions on one or more environmental variables
- Fundamentally, Lijphart's typology of democracies takes the causes of performance beyond individual political institutions to entire dimensions of democracy

Structure of democracy must be analysed in tandem with societal structure to examine differences in political variation

- **Interaction between societal structure and type of political system is a crucial explanatory variable for levels of good governance by Doorenspleet and Pellikaan (2013)**
  - Heterogeneous societies allow for consensus to outperform majoritarian democracies but for homogenous societies, power must be centralised, not decentralised for consensus democracies to perform better
  - Giuliani (2016) finds that a country's background makes a difference on the impact of consensus institutions
  - Lauth (2010) argues that corruption makes the classification of democracy less clear since it undermines the functioning of a country's formal institutions
    - So corruption should be a control rather than a dependent variable
  - Lijphart just does not control for the heterogeneity of countries and their backgrounds when examining effects
    - Even Lijphart admits that "culture and structure are interdependent"
      - democratic performance depends not just on political institutions, but also on the combination of the type of democracy and sociocultural factors (Roller, 2005); if this is right, most existing studies



on democratic performance suffer from omitted variable bias and selection problems

*Basic problems with Lijphart's Typology as a whole*

Empirical limitations and restrictions to 36 rather Eurocentric countries such as Switzerland, Italy, France, United Kingdom etc

- Third wave of democratisation across the globe → new democracies in Asia, Eastern Europe (following the Colours Revolutions) and the Middle East
  - Fortin is unable to replicate Lijphart's results for Eastern Europe
- Fortin's analysis was not just striking in that the effects of the majoritarian and consensus democracies were absent but that the entire dimensions did not appear
  - Lijphart conducted a PCA to analyse the correlation between the components in each dimension, to great statistical significance
  - However, Fortin showed that nineteen post-communist states but the key features of the two blocs either lose their connection or their relationship takes the opposite direction. For example, a multi-party system is positively correlated with executive dominance in Eastern Europe, reversing Lijphart's findings (206).
  - This relationship is supported by Roberts' (2006) observation that the original sample coefficients weaken upon the introduction of Eastern European countries.
    - However, the inclusion of Russia, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan, not exactly democratic frontrunners, into the study should be noted. Fortin relies on those three states due to the fact that there is little variation on the majoritarian side of her sample. Removing these three cases does not move the picture closer to Lijphart's insights but alters her results independently.
  - In her conclusions, Fortin points out that the difference in results most probably accrues from different cultural prerequisites: "[C]onstitutional engineers ... did not build institutions from scratch after a transition." In other words, she seriously questions the applicability of Lijphart's models in different cultural settings.
- A similar non-finding is described by Croissant and Schächter (2009). The authors analyse nine democracies across Asia from the late 1980s to 2005. Lijphart's framework is adopted with the exception of the interest groups indicator since no reliable data on the countries under investigation were available. Neither the executive-parties nor the federal-unitary dimension can be found in Asia. Rather single indicators show negative correlations and thus do not go together in Asia. Moreover, indicators of the first dimension, as the number of parties, seem to be connected to variables of the second dimension, like the level of decentralisation
- Cranenburgh and Kopecký investigate states in Southern Africa for consensus and majoritarian patterns of democracy (2004). They do find related structures of formal

institutions but cannot find regularities on the more informal executive-parties dimension.

- Furthermore, when investigating the workings of South Africa as a consensus democracy, contextual forces and historical pathways exert a considerable influence on how the political system actually works.
- However, the insights from the case study confirm the difficulties of applying Lijphart's typology outside the OECD world. In another in-depth investigation on Namibia, Cranenburgh notes that "political culture and elite behaviour [...] should count as the most important independent variables in [dominant one-party] system[s]" as found all over Africa. She fully reassesses Namibia's political systems along Lijphart's 1999 typology and finds mixed results in the institutional setup.
  - Although some consensual features are present, the one-party dominance in many African states makes the institutionalist majoritarian-consensus framework inept to classify African political systems (601-2).
- In general, these studies should be taken as a grain of salt because of the limited time period and the number of cases used