Comparing Political Systems

Comparing Democracies

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Plan of the lecture

In this lecture, I will discuss how to compare models of political representation. To do so, I will

1. Introduce the idea of consensus, or Westminster, vs majoritarian models developed by Arendt Lijphart.

2. I will use this typology to see if different patterns of democracy can be established.

3. The lecture will conclude discussing one of the main criticism received by Lijphart's defense of consensual democracies.

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Patterns of democracy

Can democracies be classified?

Comparing models of political representation

- Once a democracy is adopted, one may ask what accounts for their different institutional designs.

- Abraham Lincoln famously defined democracy as a form of government "of the people, by the people, for the people."

- In one of Lijphart's most famous work, he used Lincoln's idea of democracy to define two particular models of political representation: the majoritarian and the consensual models of democracy.

- Using this distinction, Lijphart aspired to answer a fundamental question in understanding how democracies work: **Who will govern? Which interests will prevail in case of social disagreement or in case there are divergent preferences?**

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Main principles

1. Government will be exercised by the most preferred option among people.
2. Policies will, consequently, implement the preference most preferred by citizens.
3. This democratic ideal is close to the idea of democracy as a political system by the people and for the people. It assumes a majority and a minority.
4. Majoritarian models are exclusive and competitive.
5. Majoritarian models of democracy generate absolute political winners and absolute political losers.

Main Principles

1. Government will be exercised by as many actors as possible. In this sense, consensual institutions seek to share, disperse and limit power.
2. Policies will seek to incorporate different, but related, preferences.
3. In consensual models, majority is a necessary condition that needs to observed. This implies that political institutions are designed to accommodate the largest majority that can be possibly be assembled.
4. Consensual institutions are inclusive and cooperative.
5. Consensual models of democracy generate relative political winners and losers.

How to classify democracies?

- Lijphart identifies eight distinguishing features that account for differences between the majoritarian and consensual models of democracy.
- These eight institutions can be grouped around two different dimensions:
    1. **Executive-political parties dimension:** This dimension refers to how the executive, political parties, electoral systems and interest groups are arranged.
    2. **Federal-unitary dimension:** This dimension accounts for differences in aspects related to the territorial organization.

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The executive-political party dimension

	Majoritarian	**Consensus**
Executive	Single party	Coalitions
Legislative	Subordinated	Autonomous
Electoral system	Disproportional	Proportional
Party system	Bipartisan	Multi-party
Interest groups	Competitive	Corporatist

	Majoritarian	**Consensual**
Territorial organization	Centralized	Federal
# Chambers	1	2
Constitutions	Rigid	Flexible

Lijphart's assessment on the performance of democracies

- In his 1999 "Patterns of democracy", Lijphart concludes that the consensual model of democracy outperforms majoritarian systems because:
    - Consensual democracies reduce conflict, particularly in multi-ethnic countries.
    - Levels of cabinet support are higher in consensual than in majoritarian democracies.
    - Majoritarian democracies reduce political participation.
- One way to test these claims is by looking at how models of political representation used in industrialised democracies serve to explain levels of governance.

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Testing models of democracy

- Conducting an empirical research implies identifying the relevant variables:
  - **Dependent variables**: World Bank governance indicators
  - **Independent variables**: Parliamentary fragmentation (executive-party dimension) and Territorial organization (federal-unitary dimension)
- It also implies to decide how you will explore the relationship between the variables of interest.

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Dependent variable: How is "governance" operationalized?

- Following Kaufman, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2010), there are six dimensions split in three areas.

    1. **AREA 1** - **How governments are selected and controlled for.**
        1.1 Voice and accountability.
        1.2 Political stability and absence of violence/terrorism.

    2. **AREA 2** - **Capacity of governments to implement policies.**
        2.1 Government effectiveness.
        2.2 Regulatory quality.

    3. **AREA 3** - **Respect for institutions from citizens and State.**
        3.1 Rule of law.
        3.2 Control of corruption.

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Dependent variable: How is "governance" measured?

- Kaufman and his collaborators create an aggregate indicator ranking from -2.5 to 2.5 or in percentiles ranking (where high values means better outcomes)

- However, to make the interpretation easier, this scale can be re-estimated to a 0-10 scale where, again, high values indicate good performance on a particular item and low values indicate the opposite.

- Read the details of how these indicators are calculated!
    - *Kaufman et al.*

- And explore the data!
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Independent variables: How are the Lijphartian models of democracy operationalized?

- **The divided party control index.**
    1. Indicator developed by the Varieties of Democracy project (Vdem)
    2. This indicator seeks to capture the executive-parties dimension as explained by Lijphart.
- **The division of power index.**
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Independent variables: The divided party control index

- This index answer the question: Are the executive and legislature controlled by different political parties?
- Low values of the index refers to a single party controlling both the executive and legislative branches of national governments.
  - Example: Strong single party cabinets in parliamentary democracies like the UK.
- Mid values refer to situations where single multi-party coalitions controls both branches of national government.
  - Example: Fragmented parliaments like in Norway or Netherlands.
- High values of the index refers to situations where different parties or individuals controlling separately the executive and legislative branches.
  - Example: French cohabitation government or US divided government.

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Independent variables: The division of power index

- The index answer the question: Are there elected local and regional governments, and — if so — to what extent can they operate without interference from unelected bodies at the local level?
- Low values of the index refers to countries with no elected subnational governments.
  - Example: Luxembourg.
- Mid values refer to different situations: Existence of strong local government but no regional ones. But also cases where local and regional governments elect an executive but no legislative power.
  - Example: Portugal, New Zealand or Ireland where strong local governments exist but no regional powers.
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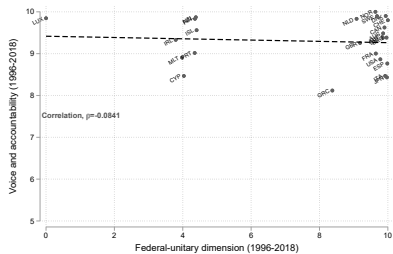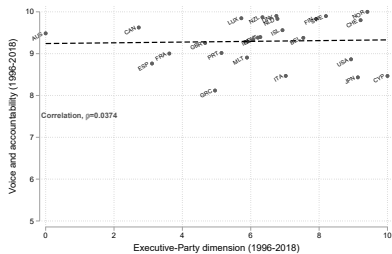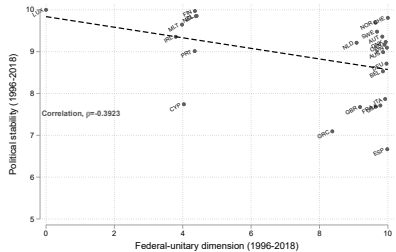 - Example: Germany, USA, Australia, Switzerland or Spain.
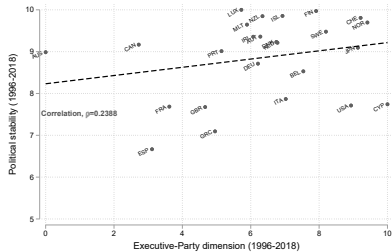
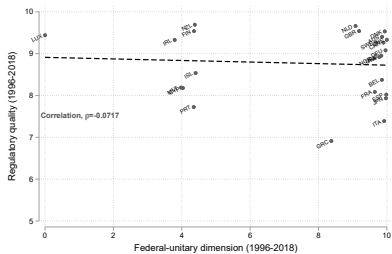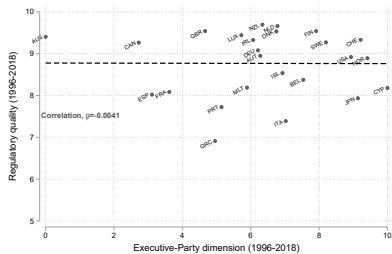Now you are ready to perform the analysis.

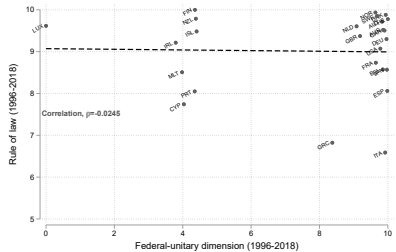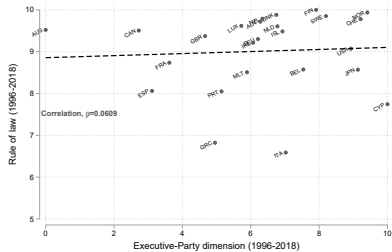# Effectiveness
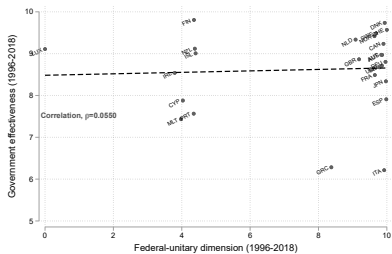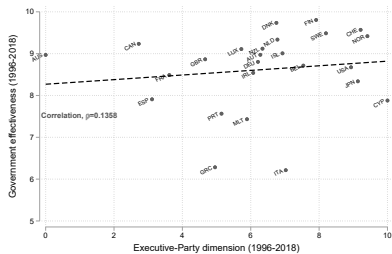
Corruption
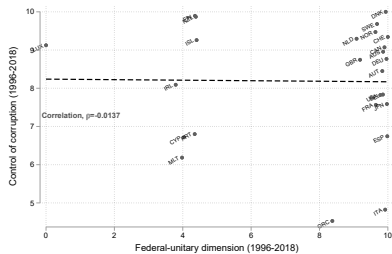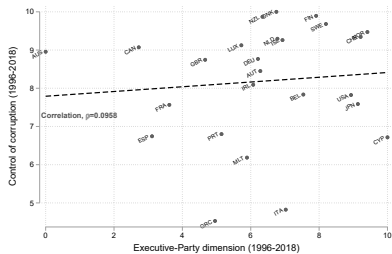
Accountability

Stability

Regulation

Rule of law

Some conclusions?

1. Both indicators seem to show that consensual democracies generate greater levels in governance indicators. However:
    1.1 While the direction of the relationship is clear, the strength is weak.
        1.1.1 Using the Executive-Party dimension, the correlation varies from 0.24 (Stability) to approximately 0 (Accountability, Regulation and Rule of law).
        1.1.2 Using the Federal-Uniatry dimension, the correlation varies from approximately 0(Corruption and Rule of Law) to -0.39 (Stability).
    1.2 When comparing indicators under different models of territorial organizations, the differences are very small.

Beyond the Lijphartian debate

Contesting consensual democracies: Horowitz vs Lijphart

- In 1985, Donald Horowitz published his famous book "Ethnic groups in conflicts" which argues against consensus institutional arrangements like those defended by Lijphart.

- Horowitz reacts against the Lijphartian assumption that elites from different groups have an interest in reaching agreements.

- Horowitz shows that this is not the case in societies where strong ethnic cleavages exist.

  - Why would leaders of majority groups cooperate if they can control the decision-making process?

- The solution is to establish power-sharing institutions but where different groups are not clustered but mixed.

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Contesting consensual democracies

- Horowitz rejects proportional representation and parliamentary systems.
- PR is rejected because it will increase intra-ethnic competition and that would favour ethnic radical parties.
    - Instead of PR, Horowitz defends preferential voting as a method that require coordination from different groups.
- Strong presidential systems are preferred to parliamentary ones because the president would need to be responsive to a broader constituency in order to remain in power.
- Horowitz's hypotheses find empirical support for some scholars.
    - B. Reilly (2001) finds that AV accommodates ethnic tensions after analyzing Papua New Guinea.
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Satisfaction with democracy in multi-ethnic countries

- One way to explore the effect of institutional designs is by looking at how satisfaction with democracy varies in multi-ethnic societies where different types of institutional design exists.

- Satisfaction with democracy can be understood as an indicator of support of the rules and institutions regulating the political system.

- Central and Easter Europe is an ideal region to explore this issues given that:

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  - There exist variations in institutional designs like party regulations, electoral system and type of executive.

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Alonso and Ruiz-Rufino (2007) develop and test the following hypotheses:

1. *Parliamentary representation boosts satisfaction with democracy. Ethnic minorities that have a voice in the parliament will be more satisfied than those ethnic minorities that are excluded from political representation.*

2a. *Ethnic minority groups with parliamentary representation will be more satisfied with democracy in political systems where parliaments not only control the executive but also monopolize legislative initiatives, or*

2b. *Ethnic minority groups with parliamentary representation will be more satisfied with democracy in political systems where parliaments control the executive, but they do not monopolize the law-making process because of the interaction of a popularly elected head of state*

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Satisfaction with democracy in multi-ethnic countries

The analysis is based on how ethnic minorities in CEE are represented in the political system.

Country	Largest Ethnic-minority	Satisfaction with democracy Mean
Bulgaria	Turkish	2.886
Czech Rep.	Slovaks	4.684
Estonia	Russian	4.102
Latvia	Russian	3.394
Lithuania	Russian	4.394
Lithuania	Polish	4.622
Poland	Belorussian	3
Romania	Hungarian	4.012
Slovak Rep.	Hungarian	4.111
Slovenia	Serbs	4.538
Ukraine	Russian	2.027

Satisfaction with democracy in multi-ethnic countries

- Firstly, having a party increase SWD regardless the political system.
- Secondly, being in a parliamentary system increases SWD than being represented in a semi-presidential system.

	Party	**No Party**
Parliamentary	1.367***	1.133***
Semi-presidential	1.204***	0.745***

$***p<0.001$

Satisfaction with democracy in multi-ethnic countries

However, and for logical reasons, SWD increases under Majoritarian than under PR systems if you are geographically concentrated.