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Author(s): Anthony Downs

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The Evolution of Democracy: How Its Axioms and Institutional Forms Have Been Adapted to Changing Social Forces

DEMOCRATIC SYSTEMS OF GOVERNMENT have always differed greatly, both because their underlying societies have varied traits, and because each democracy was established through a unique historical process. However, most major democracies in existence for more than 100 years have experienced a similar, dramatic evolution in their interpretations of democracy's three central axioms: the principles of individual liberty, equality, and citizen participation in government. This evolution in interpretation has been caused by three factors: (1) inherent ambiguities in the meaning of each axiom, (2) changes in underlying social conditions, many caused by forces common to all these democracies, and (3) ongoing interactions among the three axioms themselves. The ways in which this evolution has proceeded in long-established democracies are related to the particular institutional forms adopted by each democracy. This essay first examines the evolution of democracy's axioms, and then discusses how the institutional structure of each democracy is related to the underlying traits of its culture and population.

THE EVOLUTION OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

Most of the democracies established in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not initially permit all adult citizens to vote; they *restricted the franchise* to propertied adult men. As time passed,

however, this interpretation of the principle of citizen participation gradually broadened. Property restrictions were slowly eliminated, permitting large groups of relatively poor male workers to vote. Then women were enfranchised.

But ending legal barriers to voting did not allow all groups in society to become politically active. In the United States, black political participation in the South was effectively inhibited for two centuries—first by slavery, then by various devices like the poll tax and threats of retaliation against freed blacks who voted. Blacks' participation in politics became relatively unconstrained only after the civil rights disturbances of the 1960s.

Recent extensions of citizen participation have gone beyond the exercise of voting rights to widespread direct political action by more groups than in the past. These include groups representing special interests, specific neighborhoods, single issues, corporations, and population segments such as homosexuals. The ability of a small number of people to obtain broad publicity for their cause by staging media events has contributed to this expansion. It has opened the way for more groups to gain power—at least the power to be consulted in government decisionmaking.

In fact, some political scientists believe citizen participation in government decisionmaking has become too widespread.¹ Greater citizen participation often causes long delays in decisionmaking because many affected groups are consulted and must take time to arrive at a mutual agreement. Because of both inflation and interest payments on committed funds, these delays can add immensely to the costs of building such proposed projects as nuclear power plants, highways, and shopping centers. In some cases, each involved group can veto any change in the status quo by withholding its approval; hence, broad citizen participation may lead to virtual paralysis. Even so, the current trend in most democracies is toward including more citizens in many decisionmaking processes.

Nevertheless, large numbers of citizens in modern democracies do not participate in governing themselves. In the United States, close to half of all eligible citizens fail to vote in major elections. Even larger fractions do not participate in politics in other ways. This situation has generated two different reactions among political observers.

One is cynicism concerning the possibility of “government with the consent of the governed.” Persons with this attitude believe “citizen

participation” is a fiction that disguises actual control of the governing process by one or more small elites; they cite data concerning the low level of political information held by most citizens in democracies to prove that most people do not want to participate intensively in politics.

The other attitude is that more and more people should be directly incorporated in the governing process. Proponents of this view hope that greater leisure time resulting from higher productivity, shorter work weeks, and a more equal distribution of income will enable more citizens to participate in politics. They believe that people will do so because of the inherent joys of political involvement and a desire to exert greater influence on government policies. Advocates of increased participation believe that it would greatly improve the character and the civic responsibility of those citizens who became more active. This change would also represent a further step toward true “government by the people.”

This view of “proper” citizen participation encompasses far more direct political activity than what now occurs. Michael Walzer recognizes that expecting greatly intensified citizen participation may be unrealistic. Recalling Oscar Wilde’s remark that socialism would take too many evenings, he expresses his skepticism regarding its success:

Radical politics radically increases the amount and intensity of political participation, but it does not (and probably ought not) break through the limits imposed on republican virtue by the inevitable pluralism of commitments, the terrible shortage of time, and the day-to-day hedonism of ordinary men and women. . . . Participatory democracy means the sharing of power among the activists. Socialism means the rule of the people with the most evenings to spare.²

Yet even this modified view of future citizen participation calls for much more widespread personal involvement in government affairs than now occurs in most democratic societies. Whether citizen participation in democracies will evolve in this direction remains to be seen.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE WELFARE STATE FROM THE EQUALITY PRINCIPLE

Broadening the scope of citizen participation had a strong impact on the interpretation of the principle of equality. As more nonpropertied

and poor persons gained potential political influence, elected politicians created more ways for national governments to improve their welfare. Eventually, a whole set of government programs emerged; together, they comprise the “welfare state.” Its basic goal is to provide publicly-financed assistance to those without the means to remedy their problems of unemployment, poor health, physical disabilities, old age, or property losses caused by natural disasters.

The welfare state is an application of democracy’s equality axiom. Most of its programs involve taxing people in the middle and upper portions of society’s income distribution to help people in the middle and lower portions. The welfare state came into being because providing every citizen with one vote gave large numbers of lower-income people the political power to benefit themselves by heavily taxing smaller numbers of more affluent citizens. The net result has been greater equality of post-tax, post-transfer incomes among all households. In reality, much of this redistribution shifts resources from one part of the middle class to another, rather than to the lower classes. Nevertheless, considered in the aggregate within each democracy, welfare state programs—including the taxes that support them—clearly shift resources downward, thereby increasing economic equality.³

TENSIONS BETWEEN THE AXIOM OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY AND DEMOCRACY’S OTHER AXIOMS

The evolution of the equality principle’s manifestations has created increased disparity between this principle and that of individual liberty. Because of inherent inequalities in abilities among individuals, operating a nation’s economy through relatively free markets generally results in large income inequalities.⁴ Thus, giving relatively free rein to individual liberty economically may reduce economic equality, in contrast to what obtains in more restrictive economic regimes. Conversely, increasing economic equality through development of a welfare state tends to restrict certain individual liberties. By imposing heavy taxes on high-income households, the welfare state reduces their freedom to use pre-tax resources. It also restricts freedom of entrepreneurial action by regulating minimum wage, working hours, required vacations and holidays, pensions, working conditions, and environmental pollution.

Encouragement of citizen participation, leading ever-larger shares of the population to become politically active, is not always consistent with the principle of individual liberty. On the one hand, increased citizen participation has increased the liberties of groups whose members formerly considered themselves politically powerless, such as blacks and Hispanics in the United States, and working-class residents in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, because relatively affluent citizens were the first to attain political power in early democracies, every broadening of citizen participation has weakened their power; hence their complaints that these extensions have “interfered with their liberties.” Robert Moss expressed this view when he wrote:

The apparatus of the Welfare State has extended far beyond its original goals, which were accepted by all parties: the creation of real equality of opportunity and the provision for the basic necessities of people who are unable (because of age, or infirmity, or the hazards of economic life) to fend for themselves. The Welfare State has instead become a means of shielding its beneficiaries from every risk that is likely to confront them between cradle and coffin.⁵

Moss believes these extensions of government power are detrimental; he states that “there no longer appear to be accepted or enforceable limits to government action, which is steadily cutting away the social and economic basis for a free society.”⁶ Yet studies of the distribution of incomes and wealth in most democratic societies show conclusively that households in the upper 20 percent of every such society still control disproportionately large shares of economic resources, while those in the lower 20 percent have disproportionately small shares.⁷ The welfare state’s “interference” with the individual liberties of the affluent has not resulted in anything like the establishment of economic equality.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF INDIVIDUAL LIBERTY

The meaning of individual liberty has evolved in conflicting directions. Individual rights to use private property have been increasingly restricted in the twentieth century by expanding government powers and regulations, including adoption of a progressive income tax and

passage of laws limiting entrepreneurial actions. Most of these restrictions have been justified as necessary for the protection of citizens from adverse consequences of individual or corporate actions. For example, laws require businesses to clean up harmful environmental spills to protect innocent bystanders from pollution.

At the same time, the rights of individuals at the bottom of society have been expanded in two ways. The welfare state is designed to reduce the inherent risks of life by providing basic benefits to those who cannot afford them. Some of these benefits, such as health care and food stamps, have become “rights” in the sense that everyone in society with certain attributes is entitled to receive them.

In the United States, the noneconomic rights of individuals have been notably expanded in the past few decades. The civil rights of ethnic minorities are now given greater legislative and administrative protection than in the past. In addition, persons accused of crimes must be informed of their rights upon arrest, provided with counsel, protected from searches without warrants, and given decent living conditions if jailed. In general, the evolution of individual rights in democracies during the past century has moved toward their expansion rather than their contraction, in spite of greater restrictions on the use of property.

THE MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF EQUALITY IN SOCIETY

The principle of equality is hard to define because the situations and capabilities of individuals within every society are diverse and hence unequal.⁸ As Douglas Rae has said, “Specific notions of equality are spawned from the general idea of equality, and come into conflict with one another. Perhaps indeed the idea against which equality must struggle most heroically is equality itself.”⁹ A few examples of the paradox revealed in Rae’s analysis are worth considering.

Should equality be conceived of as person-regarding or lot-regarding? The former means providing conditions that are equally well tailored to the varied and subjective needs, conditions, and capabilities of every individual. Policies designed to achieve this must treat each person differently, in accordance with his or her specific circumstances. In contrast, lot-regarding equality provides each person with equal, objective allocations. In education, for example, person-regarding equality would involve many different

educational programs tailored to suit the talents and interests of each child; lot-regarding equality would provide each child with exactly the same courses and materials.

Lot-regarding equality has the advantage of being publicly demonstrable while requiring no attention to the traits of individual subjects. The achievement of person-regarding equality requires comparing immeasurable subjective mental states of individual satisfaction, or at least taking the varying traits of individuals into account. Some public policies, such as paying for health care, do respond to individuals' specific needs for aid by treating those with different perceived needs differently (but treating those with the same perceived needs equally). Yet while person-regarding equality is what matters most to human beings, public policies usually focus on lot-regarding equality because it is much easier to administer.

To whom should equality apply? Within a given population, should it be inclusionary (applying to everyone in the population) or exclusionary (applying only to subgroups of the entire population)? A common example of exclusionary application involves dividing society into segments according to certain traits, treating all individuals within each segment equally, but treating people within different segments differently. For instance, low-income women who head households with children are eligible for federal aid for families with dependent children; presumably, women within this group have equal access to such aid. But women who head households with children and have higher incomes are not eligible; nor are single men. Any intensive division of labor creates multiple grounds for social segmentation of this type, which is almost universal.

Trying to achieve inclusionary equality throughout a large society—in respect, for example, to education or incomes—has a negative effect on individual liberties in the sense that it usually requires strong centralization of power. If power is decentralized, however, and given to subgroups, no one can ensure that members of different subgroups are treated equally. Therefore, the more traits one believes should be equalized for everyone in society, the more one is committed to supporting centralized government power. Clearly, the principle of equality can conflict with the principle of individual liberty.

Finally, to what domains should equality apply, and what specific elements of a given domain should be equalized? Consider the broad domain of economic resources. In all large societies, both total wealth

and pre-tax incomes are unequal. Should income tax rates be made equal for all to achieve marginal equality? That policy would cover only a narrow portion of all economic resources; it would fail to produce equality in the broader domain of after-tax incomes. Persons with high pre-tax incomes would still have much greater after-tax incomes than persons with low pre-tax incomes. Should after-tax incomes be made equal for all? Even if that were done (through unequal marginal tax rates), great inequality would remain within a still broader domain: total wealth. Should total wealth be made equal for all, to create a “global equality” of economic resources? That would require massively unequal redistributions of wealth through government coercion. Yet these redistributions could be considered compensatory inequality: distributing a good unequally in order to offset a preexisting inequality.¹⁰

Broadening the domain within which equality is sought increases the need for centralized government power to attain it. Choosing how narrow or how broad that domain should be is a major issue in most democracies today. An additional complication is that different domains may be linked causally; equalizing (or failing to equalize) in one domain can affect how equal things will be in another. For example, while capitalist economic theory advocates rewarding people equally in relation to their individual productivity, that productivity is influenced by unequally distributed factors such as education and inherited talents.

Other complexities concerning applications of the principle of equality include the following:

- Most egalitarian public policies try to attain greater relative equality rather than absolute equality. The former implies that one allocation of resources will be closer to complete equality than another, but neither will ever achieve it. The latter implies that there will be complete equality among individuals in the overall distribution of the resource concerned.
- Should public policies aim at equality of opportunity or equality of result? The former implies that every individual will have an equal chance of attaining some outcome, but doing so will depend on individual ability or effort. The latter implies that every individual involved will attain exactly the same outcome regardless of personal traits.

Applying the principle of equality in practice involves grappling with difficult issues, not the least being the conflicts among individuals who subscribe to different meanings of that principle. It is scarcely surprising that great inequalities continue to exist within societies that sincerely espouse the principle of equality.

WHICH SPECIFIC RIGHTS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED
“INALIENABLE”?

There is no widespread agreement as to which specific rights should be considered inalienable in a democracy. The Declaration of Independence identified such rights as including (but not necessarily limited to) “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” The Bill of Rights enumerated more specific rights, including the right to freedom of speech, religion, and assembly, to a jury trial by one’s peers, and to private property.¹¹ More recently, the American Roman Catholic bishops declared that such rights should include decent housing, adequate health care, and a minimum-wage job.¹²

Most of the specific rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution were designed to allow individuals to act on their own behalf, or as they see fit, without undue interference from the government. Those rights do not entitle individuals to specific outcomes—only to the opportunity to act. The Declaration of Independence does not say that individuals have the right to “happiness” (something that no government can guarantee), but only to “the pursuit of happiness.” The responsibility for achieving specific outcomes is left to each individual; this approach assumes that every citizen possesses some degree of self-reliance.

In contrast, some people today argue that every citizen has an inalienable right to certain material outcomes, such as decent housing and adequate health care. They contend that if an individual cannot achieve those outcomes (as many cannot), society should provide them. This approach raises four key issues:

- *Exactly how should these material outcomes be defined?* For example, what constitutes “decent” housing? To be considered decent, just how big must a housing unit be, how well-built must it be, what specific amenities (such as heating, plumbing, water, electricity, garage, air-conditioning) must it contain, how crowded can it be, and in what kind of a neighborhood must it be located? At present,

answers to these questions vary immensely throughout the world. Should everyone in the world nevertheless be entitled to the same result? Or should acceptable standards of housing decency vary from one society to another, or even within different parts of a society?

- *Who should pay for provision of material outcomes to those who cannot achieve them on their own?* The financial resources required may be very large indeed, especially if such rights are to be provided for every human being in the world. But who must sacrifice resources they would otherwise control in order to achieve these rights on behalf of those who lack self-reliance?
- *How much authority and power should be given to governments to provide those material outcomes? And would the resulting concentration of power in governments excessively inhibit the freedom of individuals?* Experience proves that the voluntary efforts of private citizens are insufficient to provide material outcomes to all persons who cannot achieve such outcomes themselves. Instead, governments typically must assume much of that responsibility; they must use either explicit or implicit coercion (usually through taxes) to take resources away from some people to provide others with these outcomes. This process expands the power of government at the expense of the rights and material well-being of many citizens. How far can such expansion of government power go without endangering other elements of democracy?
- *Should receipt of these material outcomes be an inalienable right of all human beings on earth, or just of citizens within the society thus defining such rights?* Individual rights are meaningless in practice unless institutions exist that are both capable of carrying them out and willing to do so. At present, nation-states are the major institutions that fill this role, and they tend to pay more attention to the rights of their own citizens than to those of citizens in other nation-states. This is true in both defining individual rights and in enforcing them. What moral obligation does each society have to extend the material outcomes implied by “inalienable rights” to all other persons elsewhere? And how could it do so without infringing on the powers of governments in other nation-states?

There are no unequivocal answers to these questions that are equally applicable in all times, places, and societies. The achievement

and definition of humanity's "inalienable" individual rights appear to be the results of gradual historical processes. Three dimensions of individual rights are still evolving: (1) recognition of the basic idea of their inalienability; (2) specific definition of what rights should be considered inalienable; and (3) extension of their actual achievement to more and more people.

Throughout most of human history, governments have not maintained that every individual possesses inalienable rights. While certain individual rights were accorded citizens in ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, and other societies, these rights were not considered inalienable, and many people were denied them. The concept of inalienability of individual rights owes something to the Christian belief that all people are created by God with immortal souls and opportunity for personal salvation. But the concept of inalienable rights became widely recognized in practice only after the Declaration of Independence, and even the Founding Fathers did not extend such rights to slaves or women. To achieve that took over 130 years, requiring both a bloody civil war and several constitutional amendments. In certain respects, the achievement of basic political rights for most American citizens, regardless of race or sex, is still not fully guaranteed.

The current attempt to extend the concept of inalienable rights from the mainly political rights conceived of by the Founding Fathers to the economic rights espoused by the Catholic bishops (but not yet accepted by the U.S. Congress) can be seen as part of this process of evolution. This is also true of the U.S. government's attempts to make human rights issues part of its foreign policy, and of certain private groups' efforts to pressure governments throughout the world to end torture and arbitrary imprisonment.¹³ In each of these cases, some group is trying to extend the currently accepted boundaries of one of the three dimensions of individual rights. There is likely to be a never-ending struggle between those who seek to extend those boundaries and those who wish to maintain them or constrict them to narrower areas of application.

TWO PROTOTYPES FOR THE FORMS OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENTS

While democratic governments are compelled to deal with such issues, how they do so will be fundamentally affected by the kinds of

political institutions they have adopted. The multitude of democratic forms can be analyzed in relationship to two basic prototypes.¹⁴ Both embody all the central axioms of democracy, but each emphasizes a different one. These two prototypes represent two different answers to the question: What is meant by *the people* in the fundamental definition of democracy as “government by the people”? As Arend Lijphart asked, “Who will do the governing and to whose interests should the government be responsive when the people are in disagreement and have divergent preferences?” He goes on to say:

One answer is: the majority of the people. Its great merit is that any other answer, such as the requirement of unanimity or a qualified majority, entails minority rule—or at least a minority veto—and that government by the majority and in accordance with the majority’s wishes comes closer to the democratic ideal than government by and responsive to a minority.¹⁵

This answer leads to the *majoritarian model* of democracy. Its institutions emphasize majority rule, which is derived from the central principle of equality.

But there is another equally compelling answer: government should be responsive to as many people as possible. W. Arthur Lewis has argued that the primary meaning of democracy is that “all who are affected by a decision should have the chance to participate in making that decision, either directly or through chosen representatives.”¹⁶ If a majority wins office in a democracy and does not allow the minority to exercise any power in government, then those excluded are not truly participating in self-government.

The merit of the latter answer is that a government that responds to nearly all sizable groups in society to some degree does not leave any minorities feeling left out or neglected. Hence it is less likely to spawn resentment and disloyalty from minority groups than a government that serves only a majority. This idea leads to the *consensual model* of democracy, whose institutions emphasize citizen participation, one of the central principles of democracy.

The majoritarian and consensual prototypes can be viewed as two contrasting models in a broad spectrum of possible democratic institutions. Analysis of these models illuminates possible underlying relationships between the democratic institutions in a society and its key social and cultural conditions.

The Majoritarian Prototype

Majoritarian institutional forms concentrate governmental powers in the hands of whatever party wins the most votes, excluding other parties from any exercise of power whatsoever. They also concentrate government powers in the national legislature and especially in the executive derived from that legislature. Little power is delegated to lower-level bodies such as state, province, or local governments. Moreover, there are no external checks on the power of the legislature, such as judicial review of its actions.

As developed by Lijphart, the majoritarian prototype in its purest form contains the following basic elements:

- Concentration of executive power through one-party and bare-majority cabinets in the government.
- Fusion of power within the executive cabinet through strong cabinet dominance of government.
- A two-house legislature in which one house has most of the power.
- A two-party system.
- A largely one-dimensional party system in which political contests and governmental issues focus on a single major dimension (e.g., socioeconomic policies in the United Kingdom).
- A plurality system of election in which the party with the most votes wins office, and all others are excluded from office. This is usually accompanied by single-member electoral districts in which the individual candidate with the most votes is the sole person elected from each district.
- Unitary and centralized government, with dominant power exercised at the national level rather than at lower levels (i.e., state, province, or local governments).
- No written constitution.
- Parliamentary sovereignty: all final power is vested in the legislature, with no formal judicial review of its decisions.
- Exclusively representative democracy: no direct votes on issues by the citizenry.

Only a few governments actually exhibit all these characteristics. Lijphart cites New Zealand and the United Kingdom as coming closest to this prototype; many others have most of these traits.

There are big differences between the presidential and parliamentary forms of the majoritarian model. In the presidential system, used in the United States, the executive and legislature are separately elected. In the parliamentary system, only the legislature is elected; its members then select key members of the executive. The executive is more powerful in the parliamentary system because its members can normally count on support from a majority in the legislature. But the executive is more stable in the presidential system because the legislature cannot dismiss it from office.

The concentration of power in majoritarian systems usually gives the government the ability to act decisively. It also permits relatively strong coordination of governmental policies throughout the society. But the exclusion of minority groups from exercising governmental power may alienate them from the government or even from the whole political system. Whether this occurs depends greatly on how strongly differences among social groups influence their thinking and behavior.

If the society's population is relatively homogeneous in its major traits, the beliefs and policy preferences of all sizable segments do not differ dramatically; therefore, no segment fears governmental dominance by any other. Similar confidence is encouraged if the society's key political controversies involve a single "issue dimension." For example, the biggest perennial political battles in the United Kingdom concern economic issues: how incomes should be taxed and redistributed, how many government resources should be devoted to social services, and whether or not the government should own any of the major means of production. Little political energy is devoted to religious or cultural-ethnic questions, urban-rural conflicts, and other issues that are divisive in other democratic societies.

The Consensual Prototype

Many societies are sharply divided into subgroups with widely varying beliefs about what society ought to be like and what policies governments ought to adopt. Such social cleavages can occur in respect to many issues, including those of a socioeconomic, religious, cultural-ethnic, and urban-rural nature; degrees of loyalty or hostility to democracy; attitudes about foreign policy; and attitudes about political participation and environmentalism.

In cleavage-ridden societies, exclusion of large groups from governmental power may represent a threat to those groups. They may fear that permitting another group to exercise great governmental power could result in policies harmful to their preferred way of life or even to their survival as a group. Such fears can weaken their allegiance to democratic forms of government. As Robert Dahl has pointed out, "Any dispute in which a large section of the population of a country feels that its way of life or its highest values are severely menaced by another segment of the population creates a crisis in a competitive system."¹⁷ For example, in parts of India, many Sikhs appear to be rejecting democracy because the government is dominated by Hindus, who they fear will not allow them sufficient religious freedom. Such outcomes can be avoided by permitting sizable minority groups to share enough governmental power so that they do not fear that the government will harm their vital interests. This requires that minorities have both (1) a significant voice in shaping current government policies and (2) enough power to prevent major changes in existing policies to which they had agreed at the outset of democratic government. These objectives can be achieved through institutional forms designed to restrain the majority's governmental powers. Such forms comprise the consensual prototype of democracy, which requires the majority to share, fairly distribute, disperse, delegate, and limit its exercise of governmental powers. Its basic elements are as follows:

- Sharing of executive power in grand coalitions containing members of all major political parties, including those with minority shares of the total vote. At least some positions are thus assigned to every party with any significant percentage of the total vote, except for extremist parties (those opposed to democracy itself).
- Separation of powers within different parts of the government (legislative, executive, and judicial), both formally and informally.
- A two-house legislature in which both houses exercise about-equal powers, but one gives minorities special representation disproportionate to their absolute numbers in society.
- A multiparty system in which each party is usually identified with specific subgroups in society.

- A multiple-dimension party system in which political contests and government policies are not focused on a single set of issues, but involve several dimensions (such as the distribution of income among different socioeconomic groups, and linkages of public policies to specific religious or ethnic viewpoints).
- Proportional representation, in which each party (either at the national or district level) elects persons to office roughly in proportion to its share of the overall vote, rather than by winning a plurality of votes.
- Territorial and nonterritorial federalism and decentralization, in which significant governmental powers are formally vested in bodies below the national level, such as provinces, states, or localities.
- A written constitution that provides a minority with the ability to veto changes in it.

In contrast to the majoritarian prototype, the consensual model is designed to concentrate less power in the hands of the majority. Minority members can hold office within the national executive branch, win office and exercise significant power at lower levels of government, be represented in the legislature in proportion to their share of the total vote, and veto changes in the written constitution. Thus, within a consensual system, groups too small to form a majority can nevertheless participate meaningfully in the processes of government, and can even block major changes in existing governmental policies. The consensual prototype may be a far more effective form of democracy than the majoritarian prototype in pluralistic societies containing major social or other cleavages.

Lijphart believes that Switzerland is the only government that embodies nearly every element of the pure form of consensual government. Belgium, Finland, and the Netherlands, however, also have governments dominated by consensual elements.

FACTORS AFFECTING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND DEMOCRATIC FORMS

The above discussion indicates that—at least in theory—there ought to be important relationships between the basic conditions prevalent

in any democratic society and the specific forms of its governmental institutions. Societies with relatively homogeneous populations seem best suited for majoritarian institutions, whereas pluralistic societies containing many subgroups with diverse but intensely-held beliefs seem best suited for consensual institutions. But an examination of actual relationships between fundamental social conditions and democratic institutional forms shows these generalizations to be oversimplified. What variable social conditions are most relevant to determining which democratic forms might work best in each society?

Different Levels of Intensity Concerning Political Issues

Nearly all societies contain sizable subgroups with different characteristics and viewpoints. One factor determining the importance of these differences to democratic government is the intensity with which specific subgroups hold certain views or beliefs. This can be illustrated by a comparison of different levels of intensity concerning socioeconomic and religious issues—just two of several possible issue dimensions.

Socioeconomic issues relate to how much the government regulates, modifies, or controls economic markets. Specifically, they concern the following policy questions:¹⁸

- Governmental (versus private) ownership of the means of production.
- A strong (versus weak) governmental role in economic planning.
- Support of (versus opposition to) the redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor.
- Expansion of (versus resistance to) governmental social welfare programs.

Two expert observers have reached seemingly opposite conclusions about the saliency of these questions in democratic politics. Lijphart found that the socioeconomic dimension was present in all twenty-two democratic governments he analyzed, and was a central political issue in nineteen of them (all but Canada, Iceland, and the United States).^{*} The second most common issue dimension was

^{*}Lijphart analyzed twenty-one democratic *nations*, but twenty-two democratic *governments*, since he counted the Fourth and Fifth Republics in France separately. In most cases, I will refer to twenty-two democracies.

religion, present in eleven democracies and a high-saliency issue in nine of them. No other issue dimensions were nearly as important within these democracies.¹⁹

But Robert Dahl argues that socioeconomic differences, in contrast to religious differences, have almost never fragmented societies into “warring groups”:

For over a century, reflections about polarizations and civil war have been dominated, even among non-Marxists, by Marx’s conception of polarization around the node of economic classes—working class and bourgeoisie. Yet . . . since the Communist Manifesto was published, no country has developed according to the Marxist model of conflict, nor has any regime, whether hegemonic or competitive, fallen or been transformed because of a clear-cut polarization of working class and bourgeoisie.²⁰

Dahl concludes that major social cleavages are more likely to be based on differences in religion, language, race or ethnic group, and region than on economic class conflicts. These bases of fragmentation are more profound and longer-lasting than economic issues:

Presumably because an ethnic or religious identity is incorporated so early and so deeply into one’s personality, conflicts among ethnic or religious sub-cultures are specially fraught with danger, particularly if they are also tied to region. . . . Conflicts among ethnic and religious sub-cultures are so easily seen as threats to one’s fundamental self.²¹

The seemingly contradictory conclusions of Lijphart and Dahl are not inconsistent if a society can deal with controversial issues on two separate levels.²² One level is the arena of electoral political conflict, in which decisions are made through the voting process and subsequent government action. The losing parties in this arena must accept policy changes made by the winners (who may be just a bare majority) through normal legislative and executive action.

Another, deeper level is in the society’s fundamental political constitution, whether written or unwritten. The constitution embodies institutional and policy arrangements considered too important to be dealt with in the normal electoral manner. A social consensus exists (usually explicit in written constitutions) that society cannot change these constitutional structures without going through extraordinary processes that are deliberately made difficult to carry out. More than a bare majority of voters is almost always required to approve of proposed constitutional changes.

These two levels are related to what Bruce Berkowitz has called “pivotal issues” in his theory of political stability.²³ In many societies, certain groups—often minorities—consider key existing social arrangements critically important to their welfare. They do not want changes in those arrangements to be possible through normal electoral processes that might be controlled by a bare majority. In fact, many members of such groups are willing to remain peaceful citizens of the existing democracy only as long as these key arrangements remain unchanged. To gain their support in the initial formation of the political order, framers of the basic constitution embed these arrangements in the constitution itself, outside the arena of common political controversy.

Berkowitz believes that slavery was a pivotal issue in the development of the American Constitution. To gain the support of southern states, the Constitution of 1789 did not challenge the continuation of slavery, in spite of sweeping rhetoric about the sanctity of human rights that appears in both the Constitution and the preceding Declaration of Independence. Later, American public opinion changed enough to make slavery’s continuance a major issue in the normal political arena. As a result, the South quit the Union rather than accept the antislavery policies that seemed imminent. It took the bloodiest war in American history to restore southern membership to the Union under the revised Constitution.

In considering how powerfully an issue causing social cleavage may affect democracy, it is necessary to examine at what level of intensity or profundity that issue exists in the minds of its proponents. Lijphart found that “socioeconomic status, or social class, is of universal importance in virtually all industrialized countries, and . . . religion is often not important at all, such as in religiously homogeneous societies; however, *when both factors play a role, religion tends to have a stronger influence on party choice* [on voting behavior].²⁴ (Italics added.)

This observation indicates that when voters regard religion as politically important, they view it as more profoundly important than socioeconomic issues. Yet Lijphart also found that when both socioeconomic and religious issues were present in a democratic system, socioeconomic factors were far more important in determining how political parties combined to form coalition governments.²⁵ But coalition governments function mainly at the level of normal

electoral politics, whereas religious issues are more likely to be dealt with at the deeper constitutional level. Taking the two levels into account reconciles these seemingly conflicting findings.

Intensity of Group Loyalties

How strongly members of a given group feel loyal to that group or to its principles can greatly influence their political behavior. This introduces potentially powerful nonrational elements into that behavior.²⁶ The intensity of such loyalties can change markedly over time, and varies tremendously from one place to another. For example, religious conflicts between Catholics and Protestants stimulated centuries of bitter warfare throughout Europe after the Reformation. But the growth of secularism and the development of religious freedom within Western societies have greatly diminished the influence of Christian religious beliefs on politics. Such beliefs no longer engender much political and social conflict (except in a few locations, such as Ireland). On the other hand, religious beliefs remain strong political forces in much of the Islamic world; their importance has increased dramatically during the past two decades in Pakistan, Indonesia, Iran, and other parts of the Middle East.

Whether Divisive Factors are “Reinforcing” or “Crosscutting”²⁷

Different divisive factors, such as religion and economic status, are reinforcing if most members of one group concerning one factor (e.g., Protestants concerning religion) are also members of one group concerning another factor (e.g., wealthy or middle-class individuals concerning economic status), while most members of some other group concerning the first factor (Catholics) are also members of some other group concerning the second factor (poor). In such cases, the separateness and possible antipathy of each group vis-à-vis the other concerning religion is strengthened by their matching separateness concerning economic status.

Divisive factors are crosscutting if members of one group concerning one factor (e.g., Protestants) are divided among several different groups concerning a second factor (e.g., wealthy, middle-class, poor) rather than all similar in regard to that factor, while members of a second group (Catholics) are also divided among several groups concerning that second factor. In this example, the separateness of Protestants and Catholics concerning religion is partly offset by the

fact that both Protestants and Catholics belong to several different economic status groups, each such group containing both Protestant and Catholic members who presumably share similar viewpoints concerning economic status.

Societies in which many divisive factors are reinforcing are likely to have more severe social cleavages than those in which most divisive factors are crosscutting. As Seymour Martin Lipset explains, "Multiple and politically inconsistent affiliations, loyalties, and stimuli reduce the emotion and aggressiveness involved in political choice. . . . The chances for stable democracy are enhanced to the extent that groups and individuals have a number of crosscutting, politically relevant affiliations."²⁸ For example, in the United States, Catholics and Protestants generally have similar educational attainments and income and occupational distributions, and belong to many of the same groups concerning nonreligious factors. Any likely political impacts of their religious differences are muted by their joint membership in these other groups. In contrast, most Chinese citizens in Malaysia are also Buddhist and relatively well-off economically; most Malays are also Moslem and relatively poor. These triply-reinforcing divisions have created a deep cleavage between the two groups.

The Balance of Power Among Divided Groups

The political impact of deep cleavages among social subgroups is immensely influenced by the relative overall strength of each subgroup. In societies where one subgroup is much larger than all others and commands more resources, the distribution of political power will be quite different from that in societies where several major subgroups have roughly the same size and resources. For example, in Singapore, persons of Chinese ancestry account for most of the population, although members of many other ethnic groups are present. Hence the Chinese are politically dominant, even though they permit three other languages to be used in Singapore schools. But in Lebanon, dozens of different religious sects (often with ethnically homogeneous members) are present, and none of them is able to dominate all the others. Their relative parity has aggravated the amount of conflict in that society.

Robert Dahl contends that societies containing just two major social groups are more likely to be gripped by intense political conflict

than those containing many social groups, none of which constitutes a majority. In a society with only two major social groups, one group is a majority and the other a minority; the latter may feel threatened by a government dominated by the former, especially if the minority seems perpetually condemned to being out of power. Northern Ireland exemplifies this situation. But in a multigroup society in which no one group can completely dominate, groups are more likely to cooperate in order to aggregate enough power to accomplish common goals. Dahl cites India as an example of this situation.²⁹

The Geographic Location of Different Subgroups

If most members of a certain group are concentrated in a single area of a nation, and if that area's population consists primarily of those members, the area is likely to press for considerable autonomy in its own affairs. Members of the concentrated group may even seek independence from the nation. Such pressure is clearly visible today among the Basques in Spain, the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Sikhs in parts of India. However, geographic concentration of a minority also makes it possible to create a federal system of government in which considerable power is delegated to local residents. Such strong federalism is difficult or impossible when members of each minority are scattered geographically, with members of many different groups commingled in each area.

Total Size of the Nation

The larger a nation's population, the harder it is to achieve unity among its members. Large nations are more likely to contain heterogeneous ethnic groups than small nations are. Moreover, differing regional perspectives are more likely to have developed over time within big nations. Consequently, large countries are more likely to adopt federal systems that decentralize power. Also, G. Bingham Powell, Jr., found population size positively related to political rioting and deaths.³⁰ Perhaps the remoteness from government felt by average citizens in a large nation predisposes them to seek meaningful participation through violence rather than through more legitimate channels.

Prior Traditional Relationships Among Elites

Democracy requires a certain degree of trust among leaders of all major social groups. Leaders must not fear that other groups, if they

gain power, will act in a hostile manner toward them or their groups. Whether such attitudes of reciprocal trust and tolerance exist among leadership elites in a society is determined by their past relationships. For example, in some African nations, neighboring tribes have long histories of bitter warfare in which each tribe has murdered thousands of the other tribe's members. Such relationships are hardly a foundation for stable democracy in a newly-independent nation.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SPECIFIC CONSTITUTIONAL AND ELECTORAL FORMS IN DEMOCRACY

Recent empirical studies prove that specific constitutional and electoral forms are not the only major determinants of government behavior in democracies. Moreover, causality often flows two ways: a society's specific institutional forms influence its political behavior, but its underlying social traits may also influence its initial choice of institutional forms. The latter relationship is vital in considering what forms might be best suited to presently nondemocratic societies if and when they consider becoming democracies.

Electoral and Party Systems

Two key aspects of democratic institutions are how governments are elected and how many major parties the political system contains. These aspects are closely related because each type of electoral system generates a specific type of party system.

One of the two commonly used methods of choosing a government is electing a single representative from each geographic district. The candidate who gets the most votes is chosen; all others are rejected. Use of such single-member district representation emphasizes winning a plurality of votes in each area; the only sure way to do that is to win a majority. Therefore, in the nation as a whole, small interest groups have a powerful incentive to merge into parties large enough and broad enough in appeal that they have the potential to capture a majority of votes in each district. This is why nations that elect candidates from single-member districts usually have two-party systems. Six of the twenty-two democracies analyzed by Lijphart used some type of majority or plurality electoral system; he calculated an average of 2.4 effective parties in each of these nations.³¹

This electoral system is philosophically congruent with the majoritarian approach to democracy, as it awards all governmental power to whichever candidate wins the most votes. But the majority party tends to be overrepresented in the national legislature in relation to its share of the total popular vote. This occurs because the losing minority voters in each district are, in effect, not represented at all in the legislature, even though they may comprise a significant fraction of the district's total popular vote. This electoral arrangement is found in most majoritarian systems of government. For example, in the recent British election, the Conservatives won only 42 percent of the popular vote, but they have a large majority in the House of Commons.

The other widely used method of choosing a government is electing several representatives from each district and dividing them among major parties in rough proportion to their shares of the popular vote there. Such proportional representation can be carried out in several ways.³² All tend to generate multiparty systems because minority parties can gain representation in the national legislature even if they do not win a majority or plurality of votes in any district. Proportional representation is most often associated with parliamentary governments rather than presidential ones.³³ Fifteen of the twenty-two democracies analyzed by Lijphart used proportional representation; they averaged 3.8 effective parties per nation.³⁴

Proportional representation and multiparty systems are philosophically congruent with the consensual approach to democracy because they provide means for nonmajority groups to participate directly in government. Such participation can occur through representation in the legislature and representation in the executive when coalition governments are formed.

HOW CLOSE ARE ACTUAL DEMOCRACIES TO THE TWO MAJOR PROTOTYPES?

To answer this question, Lijphart studied the twenty-one societies he considered to be reasonably stable democracies as of 1980. His factor analysis revealed that their characteristics clustered around two factors: (1) the effective number of parties,³⁵ and (2) attributes of federalism, including bicameralism, decentralization, and rigid constitutions. He divided the twenty-one democracies into three groups

according to their traits related to each factor: those with clearly majoritarian traits, those with clearly consensual traits, and those with traits intermediate between majoritarian and consensual. He then developed a nine-cell matrix based on relationships between these two factors, as shown below. Societies he considered basically pluralist (as opposed to homogeneous) are shown in italics.

Classification of Democratic Systems by Arend Lijphart

Number-of-Parties Dimension	Federalism Dimension		
	<u>Majoritarian</u> (Centralized)	<u>Intermediate</u>	<u>Consensual</u> (Decentralized)
<u>Majoritarian</u> (Two Parties)	New Zealand United Kingdom	Ireland	Australia <i>Austria</i> <i>Canada</i> <i>Germany</i> <i>United States</i>
<u>Intermediate</u>	Iceland <i>Luxembourg</i>	<i>France V</i> Norway Sweden	<i>Italy</i> Japan
<u>Consensual</u> (Many Parties)	Denmark <i>Israel</i>	<i>Belgium</i> <i>Finland</i> <i>France IV</i> <i>Netherlands</i>	<i>Switzerland</i>

NOTE: France appears twice, for the Fourth and Fifth Republics.
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Societies embodying the “purest” majoritarian traits are in the upper left-hand corner; those with the “purest” consensual traits are in the lower right-hand corner. Thus, only three of the twenty-one societies exhibit “pure” traits of either prototype. The largest group in any cell consists of the five societies in the upper right-hand corner. They combine consensual traits concerning federalism (that is, decentralized power structures) with majoritarian traits concerning elections (that is, less than three effective parties). Another large group (in the lowest central cell) combines intermediate decentralization of power with consensual party systems.

Actual democratic practice does not conform closely to the two “pure” prototypes; most societies mix either intermediate or opposite

traits. Yet there is a notable association of pluralist societies with consensual traits. Of the thirteen societies Lijphart considered pluralist, eleven have consensual traits concerning at least one factor, and none are “purely” majoritarian. Also, all of the democracies with Anglo-American heritage have strongly majoritarian electoral systems, whereas most Continental European democracies (eleven out of thirteen) have either consensual or intermediate electoral systems.

IS “POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT INTO NATIONHOOD” A NECESSARY PREREQUISITE TO DEMOCRACY?

Many nondemocratic societies—especially those created from former European colonies—have highly heterogeneous populations marked by deep cleavages among hostile subgroups. Some political scientists believe these societies must go through a process of “political development into nationhood” before they can possibly become effective democracies. This process has been described as follows:

Democratization and other dimensions of [political] development are usually thought to be dependent upon national integration. . . . Nation-building must be accorded priority and must be the first task of the leaders of the developing states. . . . The usual view is that nation-building entails the eradication of primordial subnational attachments and their replacement with national loyalty.³⁷

Thus, greater homogeneity of views, values, and loyalties must be created among the diverse citizens of these societies before democracy can work there. Meanwhile, say some observers, such societies must remain under nondemocratic governments.

Lijphart disputes this conclusion. He argues that diverse and heterogeneous societies can become successful democracies if they adopt consensual forms designed to involve diverse groups in active government participation. Moreover, says Lijphart, it is both difficult and undesirable to end or even reduce people’s loyalties to various subgroups in many societies, as these loyalties are deeply rooted in individuals’ personalities and identities. Even in the United States, which has been a democracy for over 200 years, some subgroup loyalties are amazingly persistent. Despite the metaphor of the “melting pot,” many American ethnic and religious groups (e.g.,

Jews, blacks, and Chinese) have maintained strong group identities over long periods.

Lijphart believes that leaders in many nondemocratic societies err in waiting until they have created a socially homogeneous population before trying democracy. They should instead design democratic institutions along consensual lines, building on strong subgroup identities rather than attempting to minimize or eliminate them.

While Lijphart is correct in contending that some pluralistic nations could erect successful democracies without destroying their social and cultural diversity, his analysis overlooks another crucial factor: the self-interest of the government elites in these nations. Most former European colonies that became independent states after World War II have abandoned their initial democratic institutional forms in favor of some type of one-party government. A key reason is that the elites who assumed power at the end of colonialism—or others who replaced them—found it advantageous to end democracy. By doing so, they consolidated their power and reduced the probability that they would be replaced in a popular election.

If these elites had tried to retain democratic institutions, they would have found themselves in a serious dilemma. Many had gained power through independence movements that generated high citizen expectations of rapid economic development, yet their societies had extremely limited capability to achieve those expectations. As the passage of time has clearly proved, these leaders were almost certain to disappoint their followers in terms of economic development. A disgruntled democratic electorate would most likely have voted them out of office, no matter how competently they had governed. To avoid that outcome, most leaders of emerging nations transformed their systems from nascent democracies into one-party states in which voters had no choice about who was running the government.

CONCLUSION

All human societies constantly change over time, and their average rate of change has accelerated dramatically during the past 200 years. Yet this period has also been the only one in human history during which democracy was widely adopted as a basic form of government. Therefore, its supporters have had to be flexible in two ways in order for democracy to survive.

One is by greatly altering the ways in which the three basic axioms of democracy have been interpreted over time as social conditions have evolved (partly in response to democracy itself). Those interpretations are still changing today.

The other is by designing specific institutional forms for democracy that vary greatly from one society to another. That permits democracy's forms to be well adapted to the particular social and geographic conditions of each society.

Both types of flexibility have been accomplished without destroying the basic nature of democracy. In fact, they can be seen as striving over time to achieve its basic ideals more fully, in a greater variety of circumstances.

This proves that democracy is a dynamic process of governance and even of living in general, not a static institutional construct. Supporters of democracy must continue to change its specific meanings and forms, without destroying its fundamental nature, if they want it to survive another 200 years.

ENDNOTES

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¹For example, Bernard Berelson, Paul Lazarsfeld, and William McPhee wrote as follows: "Lack of interest by some people is not without its benefits. . . . Extreme interest goes with extreme partisanship and might culminate in rigid fanaticism that could destroy democratic processes if generalized throughout the community. . . . Only the doctrinaire would deprecate the moderate indifference that facilitates compromise." From Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, "Democratic Practice and Political Theory," in *Political Elites in a Democracy*, ed. Peter Bachrach (New York: Atherton Press, 1971), p. 38. However, every past extension of citizen participation has also been opposed as likely to undermine good government.

²Michael Walzer, *Radical Principles* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1980), p. 134.

³Morgan Reynolds and Eugene Smolensky, *Public Expenditures, Taxes, and the Distribution of Income* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), pp. 91–96.

⁴This does not imply that inequalities are smaller under the economies that operated prior to free-enterprise economies. However, many economic development experts believe the first stages of economic modernization involve increased inequalities if relatively free markets dominate during those initial stages. See Samuel P. Huntington and Joan M. Nelson, *No Easy Choice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 75.

⁵Robert Moss, *The Collapse of Democracy* (London: Temple Smith, 1975), p. 48.

⁶Ibid., p. 55.

⁷In the United States in 1982–1983, average annual pre-tax income was \$4,097 for the lowest-income 20 percent of all urban consumer units, but was \$52,267 (12.75 times higher) for the highest-income 20 percent, according to U.S. *Statistical Abstract: 1986*, p. 443. In 1984, the 26 percent of U.S. households with the lowest incomes owned 10 percent of total household net worth, whereas the 12 percent of households with the highest incomes owned 38 percent of total household net worth. Thus, the wealthiest group had 8.2 times as great an average household net worth as the poorest one. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Household Wealth and Asset Ownership: 1984* (Washington, D.C.: Current Population Reports, P-70, No. 7, July 1986), p. 2.

⁸This discussion is based largely on Douglas Rae, *Equalities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981). It also draws upon R. H. Tawney, *Equality* (London: Unwin Books, 1952).

⁹Rae, *Equalities*, p. 5.

¹⁰An example of compensatory inequality is any affirmative action program that gives preferred access to jobs to minority-group members rather than majority group members. However, such programs involve marginal equalization of employment opportunities, not total equalization.

¹¹“Amendments to the Constitution,” in Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, *The Federalist: A Commentary on the Constitution of the United States* (New York: The Modern Library), pp. 598–99.

¹²National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Second Draft: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy* (Washington, D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 7 October 1985), p. 25.

¹³A notable example of this is the work of Amnesty International, which received a Nobel Peace Prize for its efforts in 1977.

¹⁴Arend Lijphart presents the most comprehensive analysis of these two prototypes in *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984). This essay draws heavily upon that book and three others: Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971); and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., *Contemporary Democracies: Participation, Stability, and Violence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

¹⁵Lijphart, *Democracies*, p. 4.

¹⁶W. Arthur Lewis, *Politics in West Africa* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1965), pp. 64–65.

¹⁷Dahl, *Polyarchy*, p. 105.

¹⁸These four points are quoted from Lijphart, *Democracies*, p. 129.

¹⁹Lijphart, *Democracies*, pp. 127–35.

²⁰Dahl, *Polyarchy*, p. 106.

²¹Ibid., p. 108.

²²Conceiving of different levels of political controversy and action is not a new idea. Political theorists since John Locke have differentiated between the normal level and the constitutional level. Contemporary examples of this distinction are found in (among others) John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock, *The Calculus of Consent* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962); and Anthony

Downs, *Inside Bureaucracy* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1967), chapter XIV.

²³Bruce D. Berkowitz, *Stability in Political Systems: The Decision to Be Governed* (Unpublished, undated mimeographed manuscript).

²⁴Lijphart, *Democracies*, p. 143.

²⁵*Ibid.*, p. 146.

²⁶The term “nonrational” does not mean *irrational*; it has no pejorative connotation. Rather, as used here, it refers to motivations derived from goals that are not themselves rationally derivable from the broad human ends that most social scientists regard as universal, such as needs for food, shelter, and personal security.

²⁷This concept was developed by Seymour Martin Lipset in *Political Man: The Social Basis of Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981).

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 77.

²⁹Dahl, *Polyarchy*, pp. 115–18. Lebanon does not conform to this generalization—but then, Middle Eastern politics belie nearly all rational principles!

³⁰Powell, *Contemporary Democracies*, p. 154.

³¹The *effective number of parties* is a measure that weighs the actual number of different political parties in a system by their relative electoral strength. Thus, a system with two parties that each get 50 percent of the vote has 2.0 effective parties. But if one party averages 70 percent of the vote, the effective number is 1.7. Lijphart calculated that the average effective number of parties in twenty-two democracies from 1945 to 1980 was highest in Finland (5.0) and lowest in the United States (1.9). See Lijphart, *Democracies*, pp. 116–23.

³²These specific arrangements are described in Lijphart, *Democracies*, pp. 150–59.

³³Only three of the twenty-two democracies studied by Lijphart had presidential systems: the United States, Finland, and the French Fifth Republic. Eighteen had parliaments in which the executive was dependent on the confidence of the legislature; one (Switzerland) had a parliament in which the executive was not dependent on the legislature’s confidence, but it was a multiple executive. Thus, the parliamentary form is clearly dominant among existing democracies. See Lijphart, *Democracies*, p. 70.

³⁴*Ibid.*

³⁵The *effective number of parties* is defined in endnote 31.

³⁶Lijphart, *Democracies*, p. 219.

³⁷Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies*, pp. 19–20. As proponents of this view, Lijphart cites M. G. Smith, Leonard Binder, Lucien W. Pye, and Samuel P. Huntington.