

Patterns of Democracy? Counterevidence from Nineteen Post-Communist Countries

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Abstract: In *Patterns of Democracy*, Arend Lijphart (1999) not only contends that democratic institutions cluster in two distinct forms, but also that consensus democracies—when contrasted with majoritarian arrangements—are “kinder, gentler” types of institutional settings (Lijphart 1999: 301-302). The present article reveals that Lijphart’s two dimensional map of democracy, although applicable to established democracies, does not apply equally well to post-communist countries. Nevertheless, multivariate empirical verification reveals that some elements included in the consensus democracy framework should be introduced in new constitutions, but perhaps not as the monolithic cluster of basic laws of constitutions originally suggested by Lijphart. Hence the present study casts a shadow on the relevance of the majoritarian versus consensus classification of democratic regimes.

Keywords: Democracy · Institutions · Post-communism · Lijphart

Zusammenfassung: In seinem Buch “Patterns of Democracy” behauptet Arend Lijphart (1999) nicht nur, dass demokratische Institutionen in zwei unterschiedlichen Formen auftreten, sondern auch dass Konsensdemokratie - verglichen mit Mehrheitsdemokratie - einen besseren Typus eines institutionellen Rahmens darstellt. Der vorliegende Beitrag zeigt, dass Lijpharts zweidimensionale Darstellung von Demokratie nicht auf post-kommunistische Länder übertragen werden kann, obwohl das Konzept auf etablierte Demokratien anwendbar ist. Dennoch verdeutlicht die empirische Überprüfung seines Ansatzes, dass nicht alle, aber durchaus einige Elemente des Konsensdemokratiemodells bei der Gestaltung und Weiterentwicklung neuer Verfassungen berücksichtigt werden sollten. Aus diesem Grund zweifeln die hier vorgestellten Ergebnisse die Relevanz der von Lijphart vorgenommenen Klassifikation für demokratische Regime in post-kommunistischen Ländern an.

Schlüsselwörter: Demokratie · Institutionen · post-kommunistische Länder · Lijphart

1. Introduction

To compare or not to compare Latin America’s and Southern Europe’s experience of democratic transition to Eastern and Central Europe’s has been at the centre of a vigor-

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ous polemic in comparative politics in the mid nineties (Bunce 1994, 1995a, 1995b, 2000; Karl and Schmitter 1995; Schmitter and Karl 1994). While it is legitimate to question the generalizability of theoretical frameworks crafted to fit the rather uniform experience of Latin America and Southern Europe, it is undeniable that comparison with previous waves of democratization is a mandatory step in theorizing about post-communist transitions and consolidation. However, by going a step further and using the experience of well-established democracies to offer advice to “constitutional engineers,” Arend Lijphart’s (1999) effort in *Patterns of Democracy* may be overstretching, both empirically and theoretically. From this perspective, I reassess the relevance of Arend Lijphart’s prescriptions (about democratizing states) to “constitutional engineers,” by investigating his claims within the post-communist context.

In *Patterns of Democracy*, Lijphart (1999) contends that democracies cluster in two distinct forms: consensus and majoritarian. What is more, he argues that in contrast to majoritarian arrangements, consensus democracies are “kinder, gentler” forms of institutional setups. Although Lijphart’s claims have strong empirical support, his framework was never applied outside his sample of thirty-six mature democracies. For this reason, the present study proposes to evaluate how well Lijphart’s two-dimensional conception of democracy can be transposed to post-communist countries. First, I demonstrate that the clustering of institutions Lijphart observes in advanced industrial democracies does not exist in the post-communist context. Second, by using several indicators of both quality and gentleness of democracy in nineteen post-communist countries, I challenge his assertion that consensus democracy makes a difference.

I should emphasize that I do not intend to revisit the validity of such a two-dimensional arrangement and its empirical import for established democracies, nor of the indicators selected in the original work: an already voluminous and still growing body of literature has convincingly brought forward some problematic points (among which, Armingeon 2002; Bogaards 2000; Crepaz, Koelble, and Wilsford 2000; Kaiser, Lehnert, Miller and Sieberer 2002; Nagel 2000; Roller 2005; Taagepera 2003). Rather, my aim is more limited, as I simply want to establish the empirical import of individual elements of *Patterns of Democracy* for emerging democracies. Indeed, upon empirical verification, some institutional features previously hypothesized to be associated with democratic quality, such as party systems, types of coalitions, and electoral methods do not seem to shed much light on the variation in democratic outcomes in Eastern Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union (FSU), at least not in the way Lijphart anticipated. On the contrary, these findings make a re-evaluation of Lijphart’s prescriptions to newly democratic countries necessary. That is, whether consensus democracy arrangements should be introduced *en bloc* as basic laws of constitutions given the small difference these characteristics really make in the quality of democracy for post-communist countries.

2. Post-Communist Consensus and Majoritarian Systems

Arend Lijphart’s (1999) main finding in *Patterns of Democracy* is what he calls a two-dimensional map of democracy. Within a sample of thirty-six mature democracies, he

found a clustering of ten variables in two blocs: a joint-power dimension and a divided-power dimension. The first dimension (joint-power or executives-parties) includes the effective number of parties, cabinet making style, executive dominance, electoral methods, and interest group pluralism, all closely correlated with one another. The same clustering also occurs in the second dimension (divided-power or federal-unitary) in which the degree of government centralization, the number of legislative chambers and their relative power, constitutional rigidity, judicial review, and central bank independence, also are strongly interrelated.

After having established the existence of these two distinct dimensions, Lijphart then proceeds to demonstrate that states that display arrangements closer to the consensus type—proportional elections, multiple parties, and balanced executives-legislative relations—achieve better results in terms of civil and political rights, or, in contrast to majoritarian democracies, are gentler towards their populations. Testing this hypothesis on the same thirty-six cases, Lijphart subsequently attempts to extend his argument to new democracies, claiming that certain constitutional choices of the consensus-kind are desirable in most cases. From this perspective, Lijphart argues that some of his prescriptions should be included in the new constitutions being crafted following a transition from an authoritarian regime. Such recommendations seem to suggest that the inclusion of “consensus democracy” provisions in new constitutions is an unproblematic voluntary practice, thus ignoring a now growing literature on process tracing (For example Easter 1997), and the fact that most components of the joint-power dimension are not often the object of direct institutional design (Taagepera 2003). Still, in Lijphart’s words:

These conclusions have an extremely important practical implication: because the overall performance record of the consensus democracies is clearly superior to that of majoritarian democracies, the consensus option is the more attractive option for countries designing their first democratic constitutions or contemplating democratic reforms. (Lijphart 1999: 301-302)

Because Lijphart explicitly attempts to transfer his argument to countries designing their first democratic constitutions, or contemplating democratic reforms, it becomes reasonable to verify his assertions empirically within a population of emerging democracies, which means, countries that are still “unconsolidated” democracies. In order to assess the generalization potential of Lijphart’s propositions, I have selected a group of nineteen post-communist states that underwent democratic transitions between 1989 and 1993, and excluded those countries that did not make this conversion.¹ Although potentially interesting cases, the stable autocracies—Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—were excluded from the analysis. Not only do they have dictatorial and repressive regimes, but most of them also did not go through a transitional period after the demise of the USSR other than a leadership change in some of them. Since even a democratic façade is missing, they provide only

¹ The countries included are Albania, Armenia, Croatia, Estonia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Slovenia. Bosnia, Mongolia, and Serbia & Montenegro were excluded due to a data scarcity.

Table 1.1: Freedom House Ratings 1993-94 and 2007

Country	1993-94	2007	Duration of Democracy
Czech Republic	1.5	1	Free 17 years
Hungary	1.5	1	Free 17 years
Poland	2	1	Free 17 years
Bulgaria	2	1.5	Free 16 years
Estonia	2.5	1	Free 16 years
Lithuania	2	1	Free 16 years
Slovakia	3.5	1	Free 16 years
Latvia	3	1	Free 14 years
Slovenia	1.5	1	Free 13 years
Romania	4	2	Free 11 years
Croatia	4	2	Free 7 years
Ukraine	4	2.5	Free 2 years
Albania	3	3	Partly Free 16 years
Russia	3.5	5.5 ↓	Partly Free 15 years
Armenia	3.5	4.5 ↓	Partly Free 15 years
Georgia	5	3	Partly Free 15 years
Macedonia	3	3	Partly Free 15 years
Moldova	5	3.5	Partly Free 15 years
Kyrgyzstan	4	4.5 ↓	Partly Free 11 years

Source: Freedom House. 2008. *Annual Survey of Freedom House Scores, 1972-73 to 2007*, average scores.

limited insight in evaluating the effects of formal institutional design on democratic quality, or consolidation for that matter.

To make his argument, Lijphart chose a group of countries that have remained democratic a minimum of nineteen years. While we find no such country in the post-communist space, we do encounter cases that come close. Indeed, some countries have managed to become full-fledged western-type democracies and even gain admission into the European Union. Table 1.1 presents the evolution of democratic scores in our population of countries between 1993-94 and 2007, as well as the number of years each country has been considered either “free” or “partly free” by Freedom House. As shown in Table 1.1, twelve out of nineteen cases can be considered democracies. In 2007, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland had been democratic for seventeen years, while Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania and Slovakia were classified “free” for sixteen years. These countries are by most standards consolidated democracies and very nearly meet Lijphart’s selection criterion.²

² We can also consider Latvia, Slovenia and Romania consolidated democracies since all have remained democratic for over ten years. Croatia and Ukraine are the youngest democracies with respectively, seven and two years of democratic experience.

While the rejection of established autocracies from the sample seems reasonable, the decision to include or reject countries classified as “partly free” presents some theoretical difficulties. I consider sensible the inclusion of countries exhibiting positive democratic development over time, for instance, Albania, Georgia, Macedonia and Moldova. However political developments in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia make them more complex cases. As it is apparent in Table 1.1, all three of these states have exhibited upsetting backward trends in their post-transition paths and some have even shifted into the “not free” category. On the one hand, to faithfully replicate Lijphart’s study, the selected cases must be democracies and none of these countries can be qualified as such. On the other hand, excluding these three states on the basis of a *post facto* analysis of what happened after the transition (at a further point in time) also is not an entirely satisfying option. Indeed, claims about what facilitates consolidation and fosters democratic quality are laid on shaky grounds when the cases showing a failed or protracted transition from autocracy to democracy are excluded from the sample. Because I believe that the experience of these countries adds substantive value to the decision to revisit Lijphart’s propositions, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia will be incorporated in the analyses, although I will carefully evaluate whether their inclusion significantly affects results where relevant.

3. Lijphart’s Dimensions in Post-Communist Countries

3.1 *The Executives-Parties Dimension*

The first variable—*effective number of parties*—was calculated using the formula developed by Laakso and Taagepera (1979) $N=1/\sum S_i^2$, where S_i is the percentage of seats obtained by each party. In total, this study comprises over 75 elections from 1989 to March 2003. Since the number of elections for each country from its independence to 2003 varies from one to five, some problems could be foreseen for countries in which only one or two elections have been held since the transition. However, by comparing the average difference from the mean of all elections combined with the mean of all first elections, I observed that the likelihood of substantial change in the effective number of parties from ten years to twenty years is not very high. While for some countries a considerable difference exists between the first election and the mean value of the effective number of parties—for example in Latvia, Russia, and the Ukraine—most states seem to exhibit stable trends, similar to Lijphart’s sample.³

The second item is set to capture the dynamics of *cabinet formation* in both parliamentary and presidential systems.⁴ More specifically, this measure encapsulates the

3 For the majority of the thirty-six democracies included in *Patterns of Democracy*, little variation occurs over time. Perhaps more importantly, the maturity of a party system is no safeguard against fluctuations. For example, Belgium and Austria experienced long term trends towards greater multipartism, while the effective number of parties declined over time in Portugal.

4 Although Lijphart (1999) recognizes that the classification of one-party versus coalition cabinets, and minimal winning versus oversized versus minority cabinets have been applied

proportion of time in which minimal winning and one-party governments were in power in a given country (data from Armingeon and Careja 2004). In particular, this second variable should measure the proportion of time during which cabinets in power were one-party and minimal winning as opposed to other types—minimal winning coalition, minority one-party, minority coalition, or oversized coalition. Therefore, the possible values for parliamentary systems range from zero to one hundred per cent in both minimal winning cabinets and one-party cabinets.⁵

Lijphart (1999) proposed a measure based on the durability of cabinets to measure the third item, *executive dominance*. Yet, he encountered difficulties with this system of quantification when attempting to account for presidential and semi-presidential regimes. In fact, “several important adjustments” were required for presidential systems, since “cabinet duration gives a completely wrong impression of the degree of executive dominance” (Lijphart 1999: 116, 134). As a result, the executive dominance values for the United States, Costa Rica, France, Columbia, and Venezuela were “impressionistically” and “arbitrarily” attributed because the initial ministerial stability measures produced erroneous evaluations for them (Lijphart 1999: 134-135). By contrast with Lijphart’s sample which is mostly composed of parliamentary systems, the majority of polities included in the present study are semi-presidential formations.

Given the coding difficulties Lijphart encountered with presidential regimes, it is justified to seek to increase both validity and reliability by using a measure that can account more systematically for the differences between executives’ strength in these regimes. For this reason, I measure formal executive dominance with data collected by Frye, Hellman and Tucker (2001) based on the framework developed by Shugart and Carey (1992). With some slight improvements on the original Shugart and Carey coding scheme, Frye, Hellman and Tucker’s coding of presidents integrates positions on package veto and partial veto, decrees, budgetary powers, referenda provisions, initiation of legislation, cabinet formation, cabinet dismissal, censure, and dissolution of assembly. Contrary to Lijphart’s (1999) measure, the present study’s third indicator offers a systematic way of coding executives, while also providing a way to distinguish parliamentary from semi-presidential and presidential arrangements on a single continuum.

The last two component of the executives-parties dimension follow more closely Lijphart’s original structure. To calculate *differences between winner-take-all methods of election*, I calculate the index of disproportionality (aggregating the difference between vote share and seat share) for each party in legislative elections following Gallagher’s method (1991). Nevertheless, unlike Lijphart, I do not include presidential elections in the index of disproportionality.⁶ Last, in measuring *interest group pluralism*, I employ

mainly to parliamentary cabinets, he extends the concepts to presidential cabinets as well (see pp. 104-105).

5 Here again, when looking at the types of cabinets that are usually formed, a more accurate and reliable measure requires more than just a few elections. Trends of cabinet formation estimated from only two governments are tentative at best, but unfortunately, the only measures we have for most young post-communist democracies.

6 Since most countries in the present study have presidents, the inclusion of presidential elections would only blur the effects/distortions that are produced on legislative seat distribution by electoral systems.

Andrew Roberts' (2006) data, based on Alan Siaroff's (2003) eight point measure of corporatism. Unfortunately, these data cover only fourteen countries out the nineteen I have selected.

3.2 *The Federal-Unitary Dimension*

The first item of the federal-unitary dimension is the *degree of federalism and decentralization*. The coding for this variable, ranging from one to five, is the following. The first distinction is established according to the state's constitution. Is the constitution explicit in establishing the system as unitary or federal? From that point, degrees of decentralization are accorded to provinces, regions with elected representatives versus appointed governors, the potency of subnational assemblies, provinces or regions with their own constitutions, and provinces or regions granted with special or autonomous status. It is crucial to note that the majority of states included in the present study sit on small territorial units. Consequently, most have unitary forms of government and also are centralized. Given that our population contains only one centralized federation—Russia—there is thus very little variance within this item.

The next item pertains to the *strength of bicameralism*. A first distinction is made between the countries that have one versus two legislative chambers. Since many institutional variations on the theme of bicameral arrangements exist, an ordinal variable measuring the strength of bicameralism will be used. Similar to Lijphart (1999), the second variable is coded according to the following scheme: one is for unicameral systems; two is for subordinated upper chambers; and three is for upper chambers that are not subordinated (data from Armingeon and Careja 2004).

The third item is set to depict the *degree of legal independence of central banks*, based on Cukierman et al. (1992, 2002) who review sixteen characteristics of central bank charters. The indicators pertain to the allocation of authority over monetary policy, procedures for resolution of conflict between the central bank and the government, the relative importance of price stability in the bank's objectives as stated in the law, the seriousness of limitations on lending by the central bank to the government, and procedures for the appointment and dismissal of the governor of the central bank.

The fourth component of the federal-unitary dimension consists of *constitutional amendment procedures*, and the fifth variable measures past incidence of *judicial review*. Following Lijphart (1999), the indicator I use to describe constitutional amendment procedures ranges from one through four: one indicates the need for only simple majorities; two indicates the need for more than a majority but less than two thirds; three indicates the need for two thirds and equivalent; and four indicates the need for supermajorities (or special circumstances). Since most of the countries included in the present study possess institutions of judicial review, the fifth and last item considered will be the incidence of judicial review: a dummy variable will be coded zero for absence of previous review, and one when instances of judicial review can be identified.

4. A Two-Dimensional Conceptual Map of Democracy?

One of the core findings of *Patterns of Democracy* is a two-dimensional map of ten variables clearly and strongly correlated in two separate clusters. However, looking at a similar correlation matrix presented in Table 2.1, we must acknowledge the absence of a clear pattern of correlation among the institutional features of the nineteen post-communist countries included in this study. This finding is only moderately surprising in light of Andrew Robert’s (2006) observation of a weakening of Lijphart’s correlation coefficients upon the inclusion of ten Eastern Central European countries within the original sample of thirty-six mature democracies. In general, correlation coefficients should not

Table 2.1: Correlations between Ten Measures of Executives-Parties and Federal-Unitary Dimensions (All Cases)

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

	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]	[10]
[1]	1									
[2]	0.42*	1								
[3]	0.52**	0.48**	1							
[4]	-0.11	0.28	0.45**	1						
[5]	-0.53**	0.09	0.27	0.42	1					
[6]	0.42*	0.48**	0.60***	0.00	0.00	1				
[7]	0.03	-0.36	-0.11	-0.40*	-0.19	-0.02	1			
[8]	-0.19	0.09	0.12	0.08	-0.56**	-0.10	-0.17	1		
[9]	-0.20	0.00	-0.12	-0.03	0.15	0.21	-0.01	-0.52**	1	
[10]	-0.06	-0.44*	-0.15	0.08	-0.33	-0.32	0.49**	-0.17	-0.08	1

***significant at the 0.01 level

**significant at the 0.05 level

*significant at the 0.10 level

Cells contain Pearson’s *r* coefficients

be compared across different samples because they are highly sample-dependent measures: the denominator used to calculate the correlation coefficient Pearson's r is the standard deviation of the sample. Still, in the present case, their comparison explicitly serves to highlight the likelihood that both Lijphart's and the present study's findings are statistical artefacts of the samples used, and that these two samples are substantively different from one another.

By contrast with the findings of *Patterns of Democracy*, Table 2.1 makes clear that few variables are correlated within each dimension, and what is more, some even are linked across different dimensions.⁷ Only three correlation coefficients resemble Lijphart's findings in the first cluster representing the executives-parties dimension: the index of corporatism is negatively linked to the effective number of parties, and executive dominance is related to both minimal winning cabinets and electoral disproportionality. The "backbone" of the first dimension—the percentage of minimal winning cabinets—a measure "conceptually close to the essence of the distinction between concentration of power and the joint exercise of power" is not even associated with electoral disproportionality, of which it is supposed to be dependent (Lijphart 1999: 245). However, the most surprising finding is a reversal of the sign of the correlation between minimal winning cabinets and the effective number of parties, the "second key component" of this cluster. While Lijphart obtained a strong negative correlation coefficient (Pearson's $r = -0.87$) between the two items, a puzzling positive relationship exists between the two variables in this sample.⁸

The absence of connection between the index of disproportionality and the number of parties may be due in part to the presence of mixed electoral systems but also to the effects of presidentialism (or weak legislatures) on party systems (see Mainwaring 1993; Massicotte and Blais 1999; Moser 2001; Shugart and Carey 1992).⁹ Table 2.1 shows that only effective number of parties are associated with executive dominance, but in the opposite direction that is posited in *Patterns of Democracy*. In Lijphart's sample of thirty-six mature democracies, effective number of parties are negatively correlated with executive dominance (more parties equals less dominance), whereas in post-communist countries, multipartism is associated with more executive dominance, highlighting a crucial difference between the two samples. Close observation of the data reveals that three countries—Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine—exert a strong pull on the regression line. Only when these cases are removed from the analysis does the relationship between the number of effective parties and presidential power assume a form closer to Lijphart's hypothesis. However, once the "outliers" are withdrawn, the relationship no longer is statistically significant. This finding seems to confirm Scott Mainwaring's (1993) conjecture that strong executives reduce the incentive for forming large parties. Hence, multiparty

7 It is crucial to mention at this point that the same set of correlations was also performed with a sample excluding Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Russia, and that this operation does not improve the pattern of correlation among our variables. In the reduced sample, the correlations yielded only three significant coefficients in the first dimension and only one in the second dimension.

8 However, this correlation coefficient is no longer significant once Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Russia are pulled out of the analysis.

9 In effect, the correlation between effective number of parties and electoral disproportionality only becomes significant when Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Russia and removed from the sample.

systems are found where executives are strongest, but also where ethnic heterogeneity is most pronounced (Ordeshook and Shvetsova 1994; Amorim Neto and Cox 1997; Herron 2006).

On the federal-unitary dimension, the most interesting finding is the lack of association between any of the items besides the incidence of previous judicial review and bicameralism. The degree of central bank independence is not correlated with any other variable except amendment difficulty, but in the opposite direction than what was hypothesized by Lijphart. The same absence of association can be observed for the variables depicting bicameralism and judicial independence. In large part, these results may be explained by several factors relating to the nature of the sample. From this perspective, it should be emphasized that the present study's population of cases only contains a limited amount of units and degrees of freedom, therefore making it more difficult to obtain statistically significant relationships among variables.

Considering Taagepera's (2003) intuition that several indices of the federal-unitary dimension are likely dependent on country size, institutional choice in this dimension is therefore heavily constrained by endogenous and unchangeable circumstances. Larger territorial units, especially those with sizeable populations as well, usually require more decentralization (Taagepera 2003: 16). Hence, the composition of our sample certainly plays a role in the lack of significant result within the federal-unitary dimension. Lijphart's sample of thirty-six countries has more variety both in size of territory and therefore along the index of federalism. By contrast, the present study's sample of countries contains only one very large country and a single federal system, Russia.¹⁰ The fact that the smaller countries of Eastern and Central Europe display higher levels in both development and democracy, and that the only federation—Russia—is not performing on the same level has direct effects on the results. In addition, according to Robert Dahl (2002), we usually find bicameral legislative arrangements in federal systems, but given the inclusion of only one federation, it is not possible to test this proposition, which also may explain the lack of correlation between degrees of bicameralism and centralization. While Lijphart's sample is composed mostly of parliamentary systems, the post-communist states are more likely to have hybrid systems or even presidential arrangements.

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

10 The only other possible federal system is Azerbaijan, but it was dropped from the sample, since it has not gone through a process of transition after the collapse of the USSR.

second “waves” of democratization, as a result of long historical development (Huntington 1991). Contrary to previously observed cases of democratization, the transitions of the “fourth” wave were not an evolutionary process; they were the products of an exogenous shock, the demise and break up of the Soviet Union (McFaul 2002). These differences between successive waves of democratization are not negligible.

Unquestionably, the short time that has elapsed since the countries’ first democratic elections also accounts for some of the counterintuitive findings. Since most states have had only two to five elections, some features of their political institutions could still be subject to change. Perhaps the dissimilar correlation patterns in the ten variables from one sample to another also may be pointing to fundamental differences between the concepts of democratic consolidation and stability. The fact that no two-dimensional map of democracy exists in post-communist states may be evidence that countries that have had a long experience of democratic rule acquire characteristics that still are absent in younger institutions, or simply that Arend Lijphart’s typology is based on the experience of a few specific states and does not travel well, for cultural reasons, outside OECD countries.

The absence of empirical support for the two-dimensional map of democracy also reveals that Lijphart’s choice of a sample with over 19 years of democratic survival does not allow him to draw inferences about democratic consolidation, given the absence of rigorous testing outside stable democracies. Moreover, since democratic institutions are not likely to collapse in stable/advanced democracies, little empirical basis exists for comparing the performance of different institutions regarding the maintenance of democratic stability (Dahl 2002: 93). By including democratizations that still are incomplete, or on a backward trend, and comparing them to successful cases we may have better ground on which to generalize at least within the post-communist context. On the negative side, this also means that we still do not have a framework based on a constellation of formal institutions through which we can explain the large disparity in types of post-communist political systems.

5. Performance of Majoritarian versus Consensus Features

At this point, positing that neither an executives-parties nor a federal-unitary dimension exists in post-communist countries seems the most prudent path. Consequently, it would be ill advised to cluster the elements from each dimension in indices to verify Lijphart’s conjecture that consociational democracies are indeed kinder and gentler types of arrangements. This picture is also confirmed by principal component analysis. Contrary to Lijphart, I did not observe two evident separate clusters around two factors, but a much less obvious picture that even the removal of the countries considered “partly free” does not improve.¹¹ Moreover, the prescriptive status of Lijphart’s consensus versus majoritarian

11 When all cases are considered, the scale reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s Alpha)—which calculates how well a set of items measures a single unidimensional latent construct—is 0.37 for the executive-parties dimension, while it is 0.10 for the federal-unitary dimension. These low values indicate that the combined items have multidimensional latent constructs, and thus, one single index combining these items would be unreliable. However, the lack of association between most variables (in each of the dimensions) in Lijphart’s sample also guarantees

dichotomy rests on the empirical correlation between specific items, and thus the absence of a two-dimensional conceptual map of democracy in the present study necessitates re-visiting the validity of his recommendations for new democracies, item by item. Evaluating the effects of individual components from Lijphart's typology offers the advantage of possibly isolating which features of institutional design are more important for democratic quality and consolidation, when all the others are held constant.

Following these considerations, I perform three separate sets of models using multivariate Ordinary Least Square (OLS) regression analyses to test each item of the executives-parties dimension on an assortment of indicators of quality of democracy and representation, as well of "gentleness" of democracy.¹² Only testing items from the executives-parties dimensions makes most sense, since Lijphart did not find substantial differences between majoritarian and consensus democracies in the federal-unitary dimension. The first set of models is performed on Freedom House ratings (2004).¹³ The second set of models tests for the remaining indicators of quality of democracy and representation, namely women's parliamentary representation in 2004 and the rich-poor ratio in 2000.¹⁴ The last set of models employs indicators depicting "gentleness" of democracy in the form of energy efficiency in 2000 and incarceration rates from 1999 to 2003.¹⁵ In turn, each regression was performed twice, once using all nineteen cases and a second time using a subgroup of cases that excludes the least democratic countries, Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia.¹⁶

5.1 Consensus Democracy and Democratic Quality

According to Lijphart, consensus democracies are kinder and gentler towards their population. Table 3.1 presents the results of multivariate regressions of four indicators the

a low likelihood of multicollinearity problems in the multivariate equations. The low values of variance inflation factors could have the effect of the making t-statistics for significance testing smaller. Nevertheless, this should not be used as an excuse for statistically insignificant coefficients, given the small size of the sample under study. See William D. Berry & Stanley eldman, *Multiple Regression in Practice*, (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc, 1985).

- 12 Since data is only available for 14 out of the 19 countries included in this analysis, corporatism had to be dropped from the multivariate analyses.
- 13 The values presented are a combined average of civil liberties and political freedom. The original scale was reversed to facilitate interpretation.
- 14 The attentive reader will note that Lijphart also used voter turnout in the most recent parliamentary elections, and a corruption index as indicators of quality of democracy and representation. I have performed regressions using these items as dependent variables but failed to achieve statistical significance in any partial slope coefficient, regardless of the subset of countries employed. For this reason, I will not present these models.
- 15 Here again, models using social expenditures in terms of health and education and use of the death penalty as dependent variables were omitted from results due to inconclusive results
- 16 Data from: Freedom House Survey Team. *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties, 2003-2004* (New York: Freedom House, 2004); EBRD. *Transition Report* (London: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2002); Amnesty International; Transparency International; and the International Center for Prison Studies at Kings College.

Table 3.1: OLS Regressions of The Effects of Executives-Parties Characteristics on Indicators of Democracy

Variables	2004-2005			
	Combined Freedom House Political Rights and Civil Liberties			
	<i>All cases</i>	<i>All cases</i>	<i>Sub group</i>	<i>Sub group</i>
Effective Number of Parties	-0.14** <i>0.07</i>	-0.14** <i>0.05</i>	-0.14 <i>0.15</i>	-0.14 <i>0.10</i>
Minimal Winning Cabinets	-0.01 <i>0.01</i>	-0.01 <i>0.01</i>	-0.01 <i>0.01</i>	-0.01 <i>0.01</i>
Executive Dominance	-0.15** <i>0.06</i>	-0.12** <i>0.04</i>	-0.12 <i>0.09</i>	-0.08 <i>0.06</i>
Electoral Disproportionality	-0.12** <i>0.06</i>	-0.05 <i>0.05</i>	-0.14* <i>0.08</i>	-0.07 <i>0.06</i>
GDP capita (2000)		0.12*** <i>0.04</i>		0.14*** <i>0.04</i>
Constant	0.54	-1.21	0.50	-1.52*
Adjusted R ²	0.75	0.84	0.46	0.76
Standard Error of Regression	0.69	0.54	0.73	0.49
Prob > F	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.00
N	19	19	16	16

parties-executive dimension on reversed Freedom House scores for 2004. Even in the absence of a conceptual map of democracy for post-communist countries, several of Lijphart's key prescriptions still offer essential insights into the quality of democracy in post-communist countries, but not as he originally conjectured. For instance the partial slope coefficients for the effective number of parties have negative signs in the models predicting reversed Freedom House scores, that in both groups of countries, although they lose statistical significance in the reduced sample: these findings are contrary to what is to be expected from Lijphart's framework where more parties are associated with better democratic scores. Clearly in the postcommunist context, more political parties have not been synonymous with more vibrant oppositions. Quite on the contrary, the combination of strong presidents with fragmented party systems hinders efficient policymaking and encourages executives to rule by decree in case of legislative gridlock (Herron 2006).

By contrast with the coefficients for number of political parties, those for electoral disproportionality are in the expected direction, that is, majoritarian systems are associated with lower democratic scores no matter which countries are included in the analyses. However the coefficients do not resist the addition of levels of development (GDP per capita) and lose statistical significance upon the inclusion of this control.¹⁷ Pro-

¹⁷ Furthermore, the coefficients for electoral disproportionality also become insignificant upon the removal of Macedonia from the analyses, a case which tends to present both outlying and influential values.

portional representation (PR) systems are said to facilitate minority representation and would be expected to outperform plurality systems in this regard (Lijphart 1996: 167). Yet, little empirical evidence exists in post-communist countries to suggest that PR has a significant effect on consolidation/quality of democracy, net of the effects of levels of development, even if it is known to contribute to the better performance of institutions in stable democracies. The lesson for democratizing countries may not be that clear as to which electoral method is the better option (Lardeyret 1996: 179). Moreover, as was earlier argued, these constellations are likely to be the result of the interplay between mixed electoral methods, presidentialism and ethnic heterogeneity. Overall, these results suggest that the electoral system and the number of parties *per se* may not be as crucial for the consolidation and quality of democracy as Lijphart hypothesized, when the other institutional and contextual variables are held constant.

Despite some inconclusive results with regards to electoral methods and party systems, Table 3.1 still presents a partial confirmation of some of Lijphart's propositions. The level of executive dominance is a strong predictor of democratic outcomes but only in the group of countries that includes Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia whose constitutions all contain provisions for very strong presidencies. When all cases are considered, the effect of the variable is strong enough to resist the inclusion of GDP per capita. Interestingly, however, the relationship vanishes when the three above cases are removed from the analyses. We can attribute this result to the fact that these three countries display the only presidential systems within our sample, and that the relationship between consolidation and strength of executives likely becomes less linear in semi-presidential arrangements. These findings also substantiate to a degree hypotheses drawing from the tradition of Juan Linz's (1996) work on democratization: a parliamentary system in a young democracy increases the possibility of a successful consolidation, while in presidential system, this likelihood is reversed. Whereas Linz's original idea was based on the experience of Latin America, his followers have gathered evidence from diverse settings confirming the advantage of parliamentary systems over presidential arrangement for consolidation, including post-communist countries (Stepan and Skach 1993; Mainwaring 1993; Power and Gasiorowski 1997; Fish 1999).

It is also interesting to underscore that model fit deteriorates with the removal of Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Russia from the estimations produced in Table 3.1, and that although Kyrgyzstan sometimes presents extreme values on certain items, neither of the remaining countries can be considered either a severe, or an influential outlier.¹⁸ The four indicators representing Lijphart's executives-parties dimension have the least predictive power on Freedom House scores within the sixteen most democratic countries. Not only does explained linear variance clearly decrease between models performed with nineteen countries and the sub-set of sixteen countries, but two partial slope co-

18 For both models performed with all cases, no standardized residual values are located over 3.3 for any country, the threshold above which they could be considered a problem. Only one DFbeta value is above the threshold of 1, for executive power concentration in Macedonia. An observation is considered influential when the statistic Cook's D is above $4/n-k-1$. In the present case Kyrgyzstan and Macedonia are the recurrent most influential observations.

efficients lose statistical significance in the process: in the fourth model performed in Table 3.1, GDP per capita remains the only significant parameter estimate.

Table 3.2 presents four regression models accounting for the remaining indicators of quality of democracy within our two groups of countries. Contrary to what is posited by Lijphart, larger proportions of one-party and minimal winning cabinets, a core feature of majoritarian-type democracies, are here significantly associated with higher percentages of women in parliaments. Furthermore, the coefficient for this variable maintains statistical significance in both groups of countries, regardless of levels of development (models not shown). This institutional feature, however, has no significant effect net of all others on the other indicators of quality of democracy, and loses its statistical significance upon the removal of the biggest outlier, Albania. More in line with the above findings, political systems with less power concentration in the executive branch consistently perform better in representation of women in parliament and display less pronounced earnings inequalities.¹⁹ Powerful presidential offices are associated with

Table 3.2: OLS Regressions of The Effects of Executives-Parties Characteristics on Indicators of Quality of Democracy

Variables	Women in Parliament (2004)		Rich Poor Ratio (2000)	
	All cases	Sub group	All cases	Sub group
Effective Number of Parties	-0.06	-1.53	-0.24	-0.54
	0.47	0.93	0.51	1.16
Minimal Winning Cabinets	0.08*	0.10**	0.04	0.05
	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.05
Executive Dominance	-1.29***	-1.12*	1.65***	1.97***
	0.36	0.52	0.40	0.64
Electoral disproportionality	-0.01	-0.51	-0.31	-0.46
	0.37	0.49	0.40	0.61
Constant	18.48***	25.97**	26.04***	26.24***
Adjusted R ²	0.50	0.49	0.64	0.40
Standard Error of Regression	4.49	3.87	4.92	5.42
Prob > F	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.04
N	19	16	19	16

*** significant at the 0.01 level

** significant at the 0.05 level

* significant at the 0.1 level

Cells contain unstandardized OLS regression coefficients, with standard errors in italics. Rich/Poor ratio is 1998-1999 for Slovenia, and Albania.

¹⁹ For both models performed with all cases, no standardized residual values are located over 3.3 for any country, the threshold above which they could be considered a problem. No DFbeta value is located above the threshold of 1. No observation presents a Cook's D statistic is above $4/n-k-1$. Influential outliers here do not technically pose a serious problem.

low representation of women in parliament in both groups of countries, and that even when levels of development are controlled for (model not shown). Strong presidencies are also related with larger gaps between the rich and the poor in terms of earnings. The coefficient for executive dominance remains significant in both groups of countries, even upon the inclusion of a control variable for levels of development. Therefore among Lijphart's four indicators of the executives-parties dimension, executive dominance performs consistently the best at accounting for linear explained variance in the various dependent variables depicting quality of democracy: from these analyses we can conclude that the balance between executive and legislative power is the key element hindering or facilitating democratic consolidation among Lijphart's items and that the link between both variables is clear and strong (Fish 1999; 2005). Such a conclusion is not without serious theoretical implications.

Even if the correlation between strong (constitutional) executives and lower quality of democracy is evident in the post-communist context, this body of literature was harshly criticized for lingering on shallow causes and for the interchangeable direction of the causal relation under study. Although the literature concerning the effects of institutions on political outcomes is abundant, analyses featuring the conditions surrounding their emergence and how they change over time are much less available and clear (Kreps 1990; Pierson 2004). In essence, while some analysts like Lijphart advocate the instauration of certain types of institutions after a transition to democracy, institutions are most likely not built from scratch with simple political will, under these circumstances. Indeed while some consider institutions exogenous factors, many have demonstrated that they are most likely outcomes of previous power/elite constellations (Aghion, Alesina, and Trebbi 2002; Bunce 1997; Easter 1997; Kitschelt 2003; Kitschelt et al. 1999). Thus, (constitutional) institutions might not be sole causal explanations for democratic consolidation, but endogenous factors resulting from preceding circumstances, such as the capacity of the state at the onset of independence or transition, most likely play a role in explaining constitutional arrangements.

Although the direction of the causal relation needs to be further theorized, in many scholars' views, it is not uncommon to see strong executives emanating from weaker state structures (for example, Easter 1997; Frye 1997, 2002; Migdal 1998; Young 1994). Moreover, leaders of weak states typically turn their attention to staying in power by adopting means that foreclose the use of power to fulfill their original purpose, and thus pushing substantive policies onto the backburner (Migdal 2001: 55). This is the paradox or dilemma of state leaders and might explain why strong presidencies are associated with less democracy in the present study's sample. The executives of the weakest states (especially Russia and Kyrgyzstan but also in the other Central Asian countries excluded from the analysis) have sought to stay in power by enlarging their authority at the expense of other institutions (legislative, courts) and civil society, and hence slowly are moving away from democratic rule: these hypotheses certainly deserve further empirical examination.

5.2 Consensus Democracy and Gentleness of Democracy

Lijphart also demonstrated that consensus democracies were more likely to have larger social nets, had better environmental protection records, lower incarceration rates, and did not resort to the death penalty. Yet, the models performed to estimate these variables perform particularly poorly within our group of post-communist countries. In fact, from the omnibus F statistics obtained for the regressions attempting to account for welfare state provisions and death penalty usage (not shown), the null hypothesis that all partial slope coefficients were equal to zero could not be rejected, which is an indicator of extremely weak overall model fit.²⁰ In contrast to Lijphart's sample of mature democracies, where the lowest percent spending in social expenditures was Japan at 12.4 per cent, the highest level (in 2000) in the present study's sample was Croatia, with 14.1 per cent. Not astonishingly, the regression explaining social expenditures (as a percentage of GDP) with the four indicators of the executives-parties dimension is not statistically significant at the ten percent level. Presumably, the minor amount of linear variance explained and the absence of statistical significance signals that an important variable has been left out of the model, which very likely has to do with the taxing capacity of the states. Indeed, the overall regression only becomes statistically significant when the level of development is controlled for. As for capital punishment, estimations were made more difficult by the fact that only Kyrgyzstan and Russia are the only states that still retain the death penalty for ordinary crimes.²¹ Most of the countries included in the study have abolished capital punishment for all crimes, leaving us with practically no variation to explain.²²

Table 3.3 presents four regression models for the remaining indicators of gentleness of democracy, that is, energy consumption efficiency and incarceration rates. A quick glance at Table 3.3 reveals that some features of the executives-parties dimension seem to be associated with areas of activities in which consensus democracies should be kinder and gentler, but in the opposite direction. The models measuring environmental responsiveness with energy consumption efficiency use the ratio of GDP per unit of energy use measured in kilograms of oil equivalent, PPP in US dollars per kgoe as a dependent variable. This ratio of energy use to GDP provides a measure of energy efficiency where the lower the ratio, the better the energy efficiency. However in the present case, a high percentage of minimal winning cabinets—a typical characteristic of majoritarian democracies—is associated with *more* efficient energy consumption. While, this relationship remains strong after controlling for the level of development, as in the models accounting for the ratio of women in parliament, it vanishes completely when the biggest outlier, Albania, is pulled from the analysis (in both models).²³

20 Therefore, it is safe to assume that all partial slope coefficients are probably not different than zero for models attempting to explain these two variables and the executive-parties items fail to account for variation in these items.

21 To this we must mention that no prisoner was executed in the Russian Federation in the last twelve years.

22 Even though Latvia and Albania have abolished the death penalty for ordinary crime, they have retained this type of sanction for punishing exceptional crimes.

23 Kyrgyzstan also presents somewhat outlying values.

Table 3.3: OLS Regressions of The Effects of Executives-Parties Characteristics on Indicators of Gentleness of Democracy

Variables	Power Resources (2000)		Incarceration rates (1999-2003)	
	<i>All cases</i>	<i>Sub group</i>	<i>All cases</i>	<i>Sub group</i>
Effective Number of Parties	0.00 <i>0.16</i>	-0.31 <i>0.47</i>	21.67* <i>11.74</i>	16.86 <i>21.38</i>
Minimal Winning Cabinets	-0.05*** <i>0.01</i>	-0.04** <i>0.02</i>	-0.01 <i>1.01</i>	0.02 <i>0.98</i>
Executive Dominance	0.10 <i>0.16</i>	0.23 <i>0.33</i>	9.63 <i>9.17</i>	12.76 <i>11.89</i>
Electoral Disproportionality	0.26* <i>0.14</i>	0.07 <i>0.29</i>	-10.39 <i>9.31</i>	-8.15 <i>11.22</i>
Constant	4.08***	5.89**	132.27	116.63
Adjusted R ²	0.46	0.44	0.35	0.10
Standard Error of Regression	1.43	1.52	112.94	100.03
Prob > F	0.02	0.04	0.04	0.29
N	18	15	19	16

***significant at the 0.01 level

** significant at the 0.05 level

* significant at the 0.1 level

Cells contain unstandardized OLS regression coefficients, with standard errors in italics.

In the case of incarceration rates (representing the number of inmates per hundred thousand population from 1999 to 2004), although the model seems to account fairly well for the dependent variable, outliers pose a serious problem to the robustness of results here as well. From the model presented in Table 3.3, larger numbers of effective parties are seemingly associated with high incarceration rates. Nevertheless, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and especially Russia—the countries with the most political parties—also exhibit some of the highest incarceration rates in the world. Once these countries are pulled from the analysis, along with Armenia, the omnibus *F* statistics indicates that the regression is no longer significant, even when controlling for levels of development. By contrast with Lijphart's results within thirty-six mature democracies, consensus democracy provisions here account for almost no linear variance in how punitive the judicial systems of post-communist countries are.

6. Conclusions

Does consensus democracy matter? The record is mixed for post-communist countries. Empirical verification reveals that some items belonging to consensus democracy should

be introduced in new constitutions, although not as the bloc of basic laws of constitutions Lijphart originally suggested. The first and most important reason is that “constitutional engineers,” as Lijphart refers to them, did not build institutions from scratch after a transition. Why were certain leaders able to choose the “right” set of institutions and policies and others unable? Institutional design is more often than not a consequence of the prevailing power elite constellations, bargaining, and historical legacies. The second reason why the introduction of consensus democracy provisions as a bloc is problematic is that not all of its aspects are equally influential. Upon measuring the individual impact of the components of consensus democracy, “constitutional engineers” should be aware of the better record of parliamentary arrangements compared to presidential ones. In all the regression models performed, executive dominance is consistently the leading predictor of linear variance in indicators of quality and gentleness of democracy: other institutional features, such as effective number of parties, coalitions, and electoral methods, very seldom displayed significant effects in the expected direction and were particularly sensitive to outliers. General inferences drawn on such findings would be uncertain at best.

Despite some setbacks, these results confirm some of Lijphart’s as well as Juan Linz’s (1996) positions that the evidence in favour of parliamentary over presidential arrangements is remarkably clear, although for other reasons than those they had originally anticipated. Because most institutional, societal and elite approaches to consolidation of the fourth wave of democracy are based on the experience of previous waves of democratization, one of the weaknesses they share is that many have taken the state for granted (Carothers 2002).²⁴ The states of Southern Europe and Latin America, on which most of the theorizing was conducted, were much more developed and capable than many of those in the post-communist world. But since the state was taken as constant, previous theorizing about democratization paid little attention to the role the state can take in fostering or impeding the development of democracy. Thus, differences in state capacity is what really sets apart the experiences of Southern Europe and Latin America from post-communist countries (Bunce 2003, 2004).

The danger in taking the state for granted is the premise that state infrastructures are similar across regions and time, and have the same potential, or abilities to achieve their leaders’ intentions (Migdal 1988). By assuming similarity, the varying role of the state in different contexts, more specifically, its capacity to penetrate, regulate, extract and appropriate resources, is lost in the process. This distortion leads some analysts to the often implicit assumption that governing authorities are more or less equal (an assumption made by Lijphart), and focus on the effects of formal institutions like party-systems, executive arrangements, electoral methods and constitutional courts even though, these institutions evolve in different contexts of infrastructural state capacity. Party systems and constitutional courts perform their functions differently in states lacking a definite set of rules, or in states where rules cannot be enforced systematically. Consequently, when focusing on non-Western industrial countries, further research also needs to look beyond constitutions and formal institutional features such as party systems and elec-

24 Some exceptions are in order, for instance: Johnson, 2003; Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong, 2002; Jones-Luong, ed. 2004, Easter 1997, but Also Geddes 1994 in the case of Latin America.

toral methods that sometimes operate more in the realm of “virtual politics” than real politics in former communist countries (Wilson 2005).

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

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