

Another Choice: Democracy in Divided Society

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'Democracy is about inclusion and exclusion, about access to power, and about the privileges that go with inclusion and the penalties that accompany exclusion' (Horowitz, 1994).

In severely divided society, ethnicity will determine the line of who will be included and excluded. Thus, the conflict between different ethnic groups about the problem of inclusion and exclusion will be the major impediment for stable democracy. The effort to resolve the problem of inclusion and exclusion will be the first aim for maintaining stable democracy. The usual democratic rule, the majoritarian rule, does nothing to resolve the problem of ethnic exclusion, instead, it fosters ethnic exclusion. This essay reviews the articles about the ways of democratic remediation for resolving the problem of ethnic exclusion.

Methods to Eliminate Difference

Almond distinguished democratic political system into two types, Anglo-American type and Continental European type, according to their political culture and role structure. The Anglo-American type, with its homogeneous political culture and its autonomous parties, interest groups, and communication media, is associated with stability. While, the Continental European system (as a plural society), with its fragmented political culture

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and mutual dependence of parties and groups, is associated with instability.(Almond 1956) Some British liberalists and American exponents of modernisation theory presumed that a divided society, which is divided along ethnic or language lines, will make democratic competition and compromise more difficult, then damage democratic institutions. Thus, assimilation is a necessary process in building a nation in divided societies and in realizing democracy.

While social mobilisation and communication neither erode ethnic differences nor naturally assimilated different ethnic groups into one nation-state, as predicted by Karl Deutsch, the process of modernisation with its concomitance such as intensive communication and mobilisation encourages ethnic groups' awareness of their distinctive culture and language and then exacerbated ethnic consciousness and conflicts (Connor, 1972:319-55). The ethnic divisions will not wither away through the process of modernisation, instead it will be the main character of many plural societies, as happened in Northern Ireland and Quebec since 1960s. Thus, methods to manage differences are more feasible in divided society than those prospects for conflict-resolution. Consociationalism belongs to the former category as a kind of democratic political arrangement for the purpose of conflict-management in divided societies.

Consociational Democracy

Lijphart developed consociational democracy as a model of power-sharing amongst ethnic communities to prevent ethnic conflicts in a plural society¹. Consociational democracy means government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable one. Consociational democracy, which means both the segmental

¹ Lijphart defines plural society as a society divided by segmental cleavage. Segmental cleavages may be of a religious, ideological, linguistic, regional, cultural, racial, or ethnic nature. Moreover, political parties, interest groups, media of communication, schools, and voluntary of associations tend to be organized along the lines of segmental cleavages. Lijphart, A. (1977:1-53)

cleavages of a plural society and the political cooperation of the segmental elites, entails four features: first, a grand coalition based on the principle of power-sharing in which political leaders of all significant segments of the plural society cooperate to govern the country. Secondly, mutual veto as an additional protection of vital minority interests. Thirdly, proportionality which opposes the winner-take-all principle as the principle standard of political representation, civil service appointments, and allocation of public funds. Finally, segmental autonomous norm which entitles minority rights to be ruled by a reciprocally recognized self-government in the area of the minority's exclusive concern, such as their education, language or their historic territorial unit of government (Lijphart 1979:499~515).

Furthermore, Lijphart use consociational democracy as an empirical model to explain democratic political stability in divided societies, like Austria, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland and identified nine favourable conditions for the maintenance of successful consociational democracy. These being: a multiple balance of power among the segments, such as no majority segment, all segments of equal size; a multi-party system with segmental parties; small population size, which directly enhances a spirit of cooperation and accommodation; small number of segments; overarching loyalties; geographic concentration of segment; traditions of elite accommodation; external threats perceived as a common danger by all segments; and socio-economic equality between the communities (Lijphart 1977:53-103).

The Case of South Africa

There are debates about the feasibility of consociational democracy to attain democratic stability in segmented societies which lack cross-cutting social cleavages. Lijphart argues that a plural society with its deep subculture cleavage still could obtain stability. Furthermore, he provides consociational democracy, which aims to accommodate ethnic differences, as a way to achieve stable democracy in divided society (Lijphart, 1977).

Whereas, critics argues that in a deeply divided society, ethnic cleavages can not be moderate through political accommodation and will cause chaos and civil war. Thus, consociationalism may only be practicable in moderately rather than ethnic divided societies.² Following, I will present the debates between Lijphart's innovation and its criticisms by examining the case of South Africa.

Lijphart think the newly founded democracy in South Africa is a consociational democracy. The South Africa's democratic constitution is fundamentally a consociational document which embodies all of the four basic principles of consociational democracy. Election by proportional representation (list PR) for both the National Assembly and the provincial legislatures guarantees not only proportionality of political representation but also government by grand coalition. Moreover, the constitution protects minority right by giving minority autonomy in the realm of education and minority veto in the form of the two-thirds majority requirement for amending constitution and a number of fundamental principles. Lijphart was quite optimistic about the successful outcome of the first democratic system in South Africa since the four reasons : the newly founded democracy is a consociational democracy; the optimal power-sharing system; the more satisfied background conditions; and the outcome of the April 1994 elections (Lijphart 1994:221-231). Finally, Lijphart concluded that consociational democracy is the type of democracy that is much better suited to divided society than majority-rule democracy - and the only workable type of democracy in very deeply divided countries (Lijphart 1994:p. 222).

Several scholars have criticized Lijphart's consociation model and claimed it is inadequate in the case of South Africa. They emphasized the aspect of cultural difference and argued that consociational democracy will

² Horowitz, Brain Barry, and Van Den Berghe share this kind of view and think that consociation can work well in Belgium and Netherlands because of their cleavages are religious or class conflicts which are more easy to moderate than ethnic ones.

be successful only in a society with an intermediate cultural pluralism. Barry used Northern Ireland as an example to verify that ethnic cleavages cannot be moderated through consociation, then ethnic chaos and civil war will follow (Baay 1991:136-55). He concluded that consociational methods are better adapted to moderate religious or class conflicts than ethnic ones³ (Baay 1991:100-35). Horowitz agreed with Barry's point of view, moreover, he suggested an alternative way to moderate or even to eliminate ethnic division in severely segmented societies. Horowitz pointed out that list-PR system rather than majority system will still produce a black-majority government instead of a power-sharing government to deeply divided society in South Africa. He argued that consociational democracy with list-PR system will only produce 'coalition of convenience'. There is no way for it to transfer votes across ethnic lines and no incentive for compromise between different segments. Thus, consociation will not promote ethnic moderation and accommodation in severely divided societies. Horowitz argued, while AV (alternative vote) with its electoral mechanism, vote pooling which take place across ethnic or racial lines, will create the incentive to inter group compromise and moderate ethnic cleavages in severely divided societies (Horowitz, 1991:163-203). Thus, it is a better choice for severely divided society than consociation to achieve both ethnic conflict regulation and inter group cooperation. Taylor, sharing the same purpose with Horowitz, think that to accept and propagate consociationalism in South Africa is dangerous. Consociational democracy instead of attempting to abolish or weaken divisions institutionally encouraged and legitimated ethnic polarization into communal blocs. The concept of segmental autonomy will contribute to a conflict's exacerbation and therefore lead to secession and

³ Barry pointed out four reasons to explain why consociation will be more suitable for moderate divided societies. First, inhumanity actions will be supported when the victims are members of an ethnically defined out-group. Secondly, religious or class issues allow more scope for leaders to interpret the collective interest of their followers than ethnic issue do. Thirdly, leaders of ethnic groups must take their position in defending group interests. Thus it is more difficult to moderate. Finally, the question for ethnic divided societies is not how the country is to be run but whether it should be a country at all.

civil war rather than conflict regulation.⁴

Conclusion

From the debates between Lijphart and his criticisms, there are two different goals for ethnic conflict regulation could be point out. One seeks to resolve ethnic conflict by eliminating ethnic differences ; the other consider the ways of resolving ethnic conflict relying on managing differences rather than resolving them. Lijphart had the same objective with the latter and developed consociational democracy as a way to protect minority rights, furthermore to accommodate different ethnic groups in a severely divided society. Horowitz and Taylor belonged to the former category. Taylor shared the view that: 'Political solutions which remove the factors that evoke ethnic identification may produce greater stability than those which explicitly build upon and reinforce such identification' (Kasfir, 1986:14) and suggested the new South Africa a model of consensus democracy which does not rely on ethnicity (Taylor 1994:14-18). Horowitz provided AV system with its vote pooling mechanism as the main way to cooperate different ethnic groups and moderate ethnic cleavages. Horowitz argued that consociationalism may only be practicable in moderately rather than deeply divided societies because of lacking the incentive to compromise among different ethnic communities.

If it true, then the next question is what is the alternatives to consociation in regulating ethnic conflict for deeply divided society. O'Leary examined the possibility of different ways such as hegemonic control, integration, partition, cooperative internationalism, and arbitration, for successful ethnic regulation in Northern Ireland (O'Leary, 1989).

4 Nordlinger in his book "Conflict Regulation in Divided Society" excluded federalism as well as segmental autonomy from his set of conflict-regulating practices for plural societies for the same reason that it may encourage the breakup of the state.

He concluded that there is no realistic democratic alternative to consociationalism within the existing deeply divided society of Northern Ireland. The democratic methods for eliminating differences are integration and assimilation, but they are extremely difficult to realize. As Lijphart argued, although the prospects for consociational democracy become less favourable when the segments become more uneven or severely fragmented and when the degree of pluralism increases, they remain more favourable and feasible than other prospects. Thus, for many severely divided societies, consociational democracy is the only way rather than secession to regulate ethnic conflicts and to achieve ethnic accommodation.

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