Consociational Democracy: The Views of Arend Lijphart and Collected Criticisms

The Politics of Accommodation. By Arend Lijphart. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968; second edition 1975). Referred to in the text as *Politics* 1968 or 1975.

Democracy in Plural Societies. By Arend Lijphart. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977). 'Referred to in the text as *Democracy*.

Introduction*

In the fifties and the sixties many political scientists in the Western world were concerned with the crucial question of how political systems could be made both stable and democratic. Their concern to find an answer to this question had clearly been stimulated by their desire "to clean the world up" after the chaotic Second World War, to prevent a further spread over Western Europe of the Communist-type of totalitarian stability, and to support the democratic experiments of the newly independent but unstable countries of the Third World. In their search for the conditions of stable and democratic political rule most of these political scientists came to believe that political fragmentation of a society poses enormous obstacles to the realization of stability and democracy. In their view the cleavages or fragmentation, created by differing social, ethnic,

* Literature mentioned in the bibliography is only referred to by name of author and year of publication. An earlier and more extended version of this article was presented to the *Belgian-Dutch Conference on Pillarization, Depillarization and Conflict-Management,* organized by the Erasmus University Rotterdam and the Catholic University'Leuven, and convened in Leuven, April 1983. For comments and criticisms the author, remaining fully responsible for this text, thanks, first of all, Arend Lijphart and, in alphabetical order, Herman Bakvis, Jaak Billiet, Christopher Bryant, Hans Daalder, Harry Dae;nen, Lee Dutter, Meinder Fennema, Luc Huyse, Paul Johnson, Roland Kieve, Percy Lehning, Mogens Pedersen, Bert Pijnenburg, Ilja Scholten, Jiirg Steiner, Siep Stuurman, and Mady Thung. This manuscript was completed in October 1983.

religious, and cultural groups, had somehow to be overcome before there could be any prospect of a stable, democratic regime.

About fifteen years ago this dominant belief among political scientists was challenged by the young Dutch Arend Lijphart. In 1968 he published his *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in The Netherlands.* Both within the country and elsewhere (thanks to the English edition) the work was highly acclaimed. Its success was due, in large part, to his description of Dutch politics as a paradoxical case of strong social segmentation or pillarization which was also marked by stability and democracy. That is, contrary to expectations, Holland is both stable and democratic despite its extensive social cleavages.

Lijphart's views on Dutch politics have not only become popular among non-Dutch political scientists who are interested in Dutch politics, they have also, and more importantly, served as the foundation for the so-called theory of consociational democracy.

But how valid are Lijphart's views? In this essay we catalogue the main types of criticism concerning his views on Dutch politics in particular and on consociational democracy in general; most of these criticisms are dispersed over many different journals whose accessibility is difficult for language or other reasons. On balance, the total sum of criticisms seems to make a revision of the prevailing views on Dutch politics and consociational democracy necessary. However, prior to the catalogue of criticisms, we shall describe Lijphart's views as presented in his writings between 1968 and 1981.

LIJPHART'S VIEWS

The Dutch Politics of Accommodation

The essentials of Lijphart's view of the Dutch political system are well formulated in the opening pages of his *Politics of Accommodation:* "the Netherlands presents a paradox . . . . On the one hand, it is characterized by an extraordinary degree of social cleavage .. . on the other hand, Holland is also one of the most notable examples of a successful democracy .... *(Politics* 1968, 1-2) Of a nation with a large degree of social cleavage-let alone an extraordinary degree-one should reasonably expect "dissension and antagonism ... ideological tension and extremism . . . and governmental immobilism alternating with revolutionary upsets...." *(Politics* 1968, 1-2) But on the contrary: "Dutch democracy is eminently

stable and effective!" *(Politics* 1968, 15) How can we explain this paradox?

The main part of the book consists of a description of about fifty years of Dutch politics. The starting point is around the year 1917, when three issues (social issue, universal suffrage issue, schools issue) deeply divided the nation, and the final point is around 1967, when the author finished his book and when important electoral changes also started to take place.

The Dutch society is said to be traditionally divided into four different and rather closed social groupings, called *"zuilen"* (pillars).[1] The divisions are based on religious and class cleavages.The religious cleavage is two-fold: the religious people versus the non-religious ones (about 80 percent versus 20 percent in 1960) and, within the religious stratum, the Catholics versus the Calvinists (each about 40 percent of the total population, 1960); the Calvinists can be further subdivided in several groupings (e.g., Dutch Reformed, Orthodox Calvinists, Lutherans). The class cleavage is elaborated in terms of upper-middle, lower-middle, and lower class, a cleavage borne out by both the Gini Index of Inequality and the subjective feelings of inequality being held by the mass-public. The two cleavages partly intersect each other, particularly in the non-religious ("secular") stratum, where antagonism exists between the upper and the lower "classes," in Dutch politics labelled as Liberals and Socialists respectively.

Around 1917 the relationships between the four pillars-Catholics, Calvinists, Liberals, and Socialists-were severely strained by the major issues that were then on the social agenda. The Catholics and Calvinists together demanded their own schools which, however, were to be paid for mainly by the State. And economic concerns-poverty and unemployment-vital to the lower classes were joined by the issue of expanding the suffrage which to this point had been restricted. These together not only widened the gaps between the four pillars, dividing the nation even more than before, but also created tensions within the Catholic pillar, where the class cleavage had up to then been least prominent.

This social pillarization was reflected by the party system. Each of the groupings had its own leading political party except the Calvinists, who had two partly competing parties (one more upper-class, the other more lower-class) . These five parties of the four blocs

1. For the concept of "zuil," see Kruyt, 1957-A, 1957-B, 1959; Van Doorn, 1971.

dominated the political scene. They always occupied 80 to 90 percent of the seats in parliament.[2] Their relative strengths "have remained remarkably constant since the first elections under universal manhood suffrage in 1918." (*Politics* 1968, 25) The class cleavage is, however, less strongly reflected in the electoral process than the religious cleavage. While the parties of the Socialists and the Liberals each have a clearly different support-basis (blue-collars versus white-collars), those of the Catholics and the Calvinists attract votes from all different classes. The strongest determinant of voting is religion: 70 to 90 percent of the Catholics, the Calvinists, and those who are non-religious vote for their respective parties, the non-religious splitting up into upper and lower class.

The same four-bloc pattern is found in organizational memberships: in interest groups like trade unions, in mass media (newspaper, radio), in voluntary associations, in educational memberships, and in interpersonal networks. As Lijphart pictures this, "the blocs live side by side, as distinctly separate subcultural communities, each with its own political and social institutions and with interaction and communication across bloc boundaries kept to a minimum." (*Politics* 1968, 58) Leadership of the various organizations within each bloc strongly overlaps, but between the blocs this overlap is almost absent.

Although the "Dutch society is at least as much divided as other continental societies, it has maintained a stable and viable democracy" something which, Lijphart contends, "cannot be claimed . . . for Belgium, Austria, France, or Weimar Germany." (*Politics* 1968, 70) In this assessment democracy is defined as "simply a system of government in which the people have the opportunity to select their own leaders" and a stable democracy as "one in which the capabilities of the system are sufficient to meet the demands placed upon it." (*Politics* 1968, 71) Democracy combined with stability means that the masses should be able to select their leaders and the governmental elites should be able to meet the demands placed upon them. Accordingly Lijphart views the Netherlands as a stable democracy. He bases his conclusion on both positive and negative indicators: the absence of revolution, violence, and other signs of serious disaffection, and the presence of governmental stability and constitutional continuity.

What is the Dutch secret that explains the enduring situation of

2. Daalder, 1966.

stable democracy in spite of all cleavages and divisions? Discussing a number of hypotheses, Lijphart concludes that there are two factors, plus one indirect explanation and one comprehensive explanation. *(Politics* 1968, ch. 5) The two factors are firstly, the basic sense of nationalism among the members of all four blocs, which is reinforced by a few national symbols, and secondly, the crosscutting of the religious and class cleavages. The first factor promotes unity and the second diminishes sharp divisions. The so-called indirect explanation is the deferential character of the Dutch political culture: Dutch politics is "highly elitist" and the masses accept this elitist leadership. *(Politics* 1968, 102) The reason for this is to be found in the comprehensive "explanans," in itself the crux of Dutch political stability, namely, the spirit of accommodation among the political elites. "That is the secret of its success." *(Politics* 1968, 103)

Accommodation means "settlement of divisive issues and conflicts, where only a minimal consensus exists." *(Politics* 1968, 103) The key word is "pragmatism," based on "a minimum of agreement on fundamentals," *(Politics* 1968, 103) that is a widespread belief that the existing system should be maintained. "The leaders of the blocs must be willing to bridge the gaps between the mutually isolated blocs and to resolve serious disputes in a largely nonconsensual context." *(Politics* 1968, 104) Here the value of the metaphor of pillarization becomes apparent: the four blocs are like. pillars, each standing on its own, but they are overarched by elite-accommodation. Although the basic pattern of accommodation, according to Lijphart, was already established in the last decades of the nineteenth century, it became fully institutionalized in 1917 when the three major issues mentioned before simultaneously entered the political agenda and threatened to disturb the system's persistence. Then "the government appealed to the contending parties to accommodate their differences ... [and] the parties reacted favorably." *(Politics* 1968, 110) Prudent leadership, then, saved the system. From that time on a variety of structures of accommodation became institutionalized, as well as the cultural "rules of the game," e.g., a business-like approach to politics, agreement to disagree, summit diplomacy among the elites, proportionality between the pillars, depoliticization of issues, secrecy, and acceptance of the government's right to govern.

But how can the accommodating elites be sure that their compromises will be accepted by their followers and adherents? Here Lijphart returns to his "indirect explanation": the members of the

pillars are politically passive and deferential towards the leaders of their pillar (e.g. towards their trade-union leaders) and towards the overarching system.

Towards the end of his book Lijphart briefly discusses the dynamic character of the Dutch political system, especially after the Second World War and during the sixties. All crucial elements of the Dutch political system-religious cleavage, class cleavage, elite-accommodation, and mass-deference-show some variability. In the mid-sixties there are signs of a decreasing religious cleavage, less effective elite-accommodation, and decreasing deference at the mass level. Nevertheless, "there is good reason to expect that viable democracy will be preserved" *(Politics* 1968, 196), apparently with or without continuing politics of accommodation.

Finally, Lijphart himself assesses the character of his analysis: it is *a case study, suitable to "the identification of additional variables (to the general pluralist theory) and to the refinement of concepts and indicators." (Politics* 1968, 197) His addition and refinement concern the pluralist proposition that cross-cutting cleavages and pressures are favorable to stable and effective democracy and that their absence leads to the opposite situation. According to Lijphart, the Dutch case study shows that such an absence of cross-cutting cleavages can be compatible with stable democracy, *on the condition* that the political elites are "fully aware of the dangers (of this absence) and are determined to find a solution by accommodating their differences." *(Politics* 1968, 199) Then, by prudent leadership, the prophecy of instability and chaos becomes a self-denying prophecy. "Overarching cooperation at the elite level can be a substitute for cross-cutting affiliations at the mass level." *(Politics* 1968, 200) Lijphart goes even further: when groups in society are very different, mutual isolation (pillarization) "can be more conductive to stable democracy than a high incidence of overlapping affiliations." *(Politics* 1968, 200) His final position now is that the model of accommodation is very well suited for other countries with deep social cleavages. But "the crucial factor . is the quality of leadership." *(Politics* 1968, 211)

In his article Lijphart presented the following typology of democratic systems:

		political culture	
		non fragmented	*fragmented*
style of elites	*non-competitive*	cartel-democracy (depoliticized)	accommodation-democracy (consociational)
	competitive	centripetal democracy	centrifugal democracy

Shortly after *The Politics of Accommodation* Lijphart published the Dutch edition of this book.[3] While his conception of democracy and stability are somewhat different in this translation, his reasoning and argumentation are essentially the same as in the English edition.

In 1969 Lijphart published an article in *Acta Politica* in which he tried to explain the recent political changes in the Netherlands, as well as its near political future, on the basis of his model of pillarization and accommodation.[4] He saw the electoral decline of the five main parties as the most important political change. Not only had their total votes dropped from 87 percent (the mean for 1946-1959) to 72 percent, there were new party formations, social uprisings and protests, conflicts between the elites of the different pillars, and a general sense of mass disaffection for the rules of the game at the elite level.

For the Dutch near future he predicted a development from political accommodation to a political cartel. He assumed that the style of elites would remain constant (i.e., non-competitive) and that political change would remain limited to the political culture (i.e. from fragmentation to homogeneity). So, while Lijphart in his *Politics of Accommodation* considered the style of elites to be a response to the dangers of social fragmentation, he now considers this style to be independent of the social setting. However, accor-

3. Lijphart, 1968-B.

4. Lijphart, 1969; also published in *Politics* 1975 and Lijphart, 1976-B; partly based on A. Lijphart, "Typologies of Democratic Systems," *Comparative Political Studies* 1 (1, 1968) 3-44 and A. Lijphart, "Consociational Democracy," *World Politics* 21 (2, 1969), 207-55.

ding to Lijphart, the expected development of a cartel democracy will initially be accompanied by certain political turmoils and instabilities, mainly coming from the mass-level. According to the standards of prudent leadership, a further development to a centripetal democracy might be wise, he believes, but the real chances for it are low, because it would demand some important constitutional reforms. For the elites he sees no alternative but the cartel-style.

In another Dutch article, published in 1971, Lijphart elaborates on the main political changes taking place and characterizes them as *"depillarization."*[5] Four of the five changes he observes are located at the mass-level of the society: "the end of ideology" and, in particular, of religious attachments, the increasing number of non-pillarized organizations (parties, mass-media), the loosening of the "overlapping directorates" within the pillars, and the increase of interactions and communications between the members of the pillars. The fifth change is explicitly related to elite-behavior: the political control ("encouraged or even decreed pillarization") from the top has almost come to an end.

A few years later, in a new chapter to the second edition of *The Politics of Accommodation,* Lijphart makes a different analysis of Dutch political change.[6] (*Politics* 1975, 197) Now he observes "far reaching changes [concerning] all four essential elements of the politics of accommodation": the social cleavages have lost their sharpness, many leaders have rejected the overarching cooperation and "the rule of the game," deference and indifference of the mass-publics are on the wane, and there have been many unmistakable signs of political instability. Among the indicators of this outcome of instability he cites are: civil disobedience, cabinet instability, and time consuming cabinet formations. The Dutch politics of accommodation, in short, has become a historical phenomenon. But as a model of "viable democracy"-so-called consociational democracy-Lijphart still considers the Dutch case to be of great relevance to other countries with sharp social cleavages which are, as a result, in permanent danger of disintegration.

The third edition of the Dutch version of the *Politics of Accommodation* (1979), in contrast to the previous editions, is written in the past tense. But neither this nor other editorial changes substan-

5. Lijphart, 1971.
6. Also Lijphart, 1976-B, 12.

tially change the basic text or its message. The Dutch political system from the twenties to the seventies is still held to be theoretically important because of the stability and democracy achieved by elite accommodation in the face of deep social cleavage.

The Consociational Democracy

In the early seventies, when the Dutch politics of accommodation crumbled, Lijphart lost an active interest in the Dutch political developments and he shifted to the study of other countries with sharp social cleavages. Taking up general theoretical lines, set out in his earlier writings,' he tried to develop a cross-national theory of consociational democracy.

A first result of this effort is a review article on the Northern Ireland problem.' After discussing ten different views on the political instability of Northern Ireland, he proposes an eleventh view: through political accommodation, i.e., "by inviting the `disloyal opposition' to share power," [9] Nothern Ireland can become a stable democracy. At least three factors, said to be conducive to consociational democracy, he considers to be present in Northern Ireland : the size of the population is small and, therefore, the normal burdens of government are not too heavy; the cleavages are distinct and, therefore, there are few occasions for conflict; and the external threats from either the Irish Republic or the government in London might stimulate cooperative attitudes among the Catholics and Protestants. However, three other factors, generally conducive to consociational democracy, are, according to Lijphart, lacking in Northern Ireland: there is no multiple balance of power and, therefore, the Protestants are capable of exercising hegemonic power; there is insufficient support for the idea of a "grand coali tion," because it lacks a strong element of political opposition; and there is insufficient basic national solidarity, which might help to overarch the deep cleavages. Because of the absence of these conditions, Lijphart considers the consociational solution to be "theoretically possible but unworkable in Northern Ireland," [10] and he proposes a partition into two (or more) homogeneous societies, imposed by Dublin and London.

7. See note 2 in particular.
8. Lijphart, 1975-B.
9. *Ibid.,* 99.
10. *Ibid.,* 105.

In a contribution to Milton Esman's book on *Ethnic Conflict in the Western World*,[11] Lijphart raises the topic of ethnic conflict in Western societies. Contrary to many predictions by different scholars, he maintains that these societies are exposed to not less but more ethnic conflict than before. He offers "speculative and hypothetical"[12] explanations for this, one of the more interesting being that the increase of ethnic conflict is caused by a "horizontalization of vertical ethnic groups."[1a] The ethnic groups of the Western World are said to be generally vertically rather than horizontally segmented (exception: American Negroes); that is, they are less likely to come into conflict with each other than horizontal groups. Like the Dutch pillars each vertical ethnic group is isolated from the other and provides full stratification to its members. By implication Lijphart stresses the topicality of his earlier thinking on vertically segmented societies and the problem of viable democracy.

In 1977 Lijphart puts his comparative insights together in one book: *Democracy in Plural Societies.* Referring to the political systems of the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, and Austria he develops a general model of consociational democracy and applies it to a variety of other plural societies, ranging from Canada to Israel and from Lebanon to Indonesia. Thus, consociational democracy is no longer regarded a unique phenomenon of the Low Countries: rather it is considered to be a more general phenomenon (empirical generalism) and a more universal solution for plural societies (normative generalism).

Basic concepts are the following: (*Democracy,* 3-5) *plural societies* are societies divided by segmental cleavages of various kinds-religious, ethnic, and so forth; *Democracy is* used throughout as a "synonym of what Dahl calls polyarchy." (*Democracy,* 4)[14] *Stability is* used "as a multidimensional concept" which embraces "system maintenance, civil order, legitimacy, and effectiveness." (*Democracy,* 4) And while these dimensions are not defined, Lijphart does accept the framework set forth by Eckstein and Hurwitz.[15] *Democratic stability is* also characterized by these

11. In Esman, 1977, 46-64.
12. Ibid., 64.
13. Ibid., 57.
14. See R.A. Dahl, *Polyarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971).
15. H. Eckstein, *The Evaluation of Political Performance* (London: Sage, 1971); L. Hurwitz, "Contemporary Approaches to Political Stability," *Comparative Politics 5* (4, 1973), 449-63.

four dimensions and, more specifically, by a high probability of system's democracy, a low level of actual and potential civil violence, and high degrees of legitimacy and decisional effectiveness. *Consociational democracy,* finally, "can be defined in terms of four characteristics. The first and most important element is government by a grand coalition of the political leaders of all significant segments of the plural society. . . . The other three basic elements are (1) the mutual veto . . . (2) proportionality . . . and (3) a high degree of autonomy for each segment." *(Democracy, 25)* However, "Elite cooperation is the primary distinguishing feature of consociational democracy." *(Democracy,* 1)

In a separate chapter Lijphart distinguishes formally six and factually eight "conducive or favorable conditions . . . that are helpful but neither indispensable nor sufficient in and of themselves to account for the success of consociational democracy." *(Democracy,* ch. 3)[18] These conditions are: a balance of power among the segments; a multi-party sytem with segmental parties; a small size of the country; some cross-cutting cleavages; overarching loyalties; a representative party-system; isolation of the segments from each other; and traditions of elite accommodation. These elements, he points out, are not to be unique for consociational democracy, as they can also be present in nonconsociational democracies, just as they can be absent in consociational democracies. *(Democracy,* 153-57) But the more the elements are present, the better the chances for the stability and democracy of a plural society.

In his discussion of specific countries Lijphart also distinguishes unfavorable conditions, ambivalent factors, and counter-consociational elements. (*Democracy* 153-57, 170-73, 209-11) He only gives examples of each category: some consequences of modernization in the Third World, such as decreasing deference and rising expectations, are termed unfavorable; factors of size of the country and the balance of power among the segments are regarded as ambivalent; and the pressures-well intended or not-from both the Belgian and the Dutch governments on their former colonies (Congo and Dutch Guinea respectively) to form a majority-government are deemed counter-consociational. Lijphart openly regrets such counter-elements: Consociational democracy is not only workable in plural societies, but it is also, for many countries, a necessary

16. In Lijphart, 1981-A he distinguishes another set of favorable conditions: all minorities, balance of power, few segments, small size, external threats, overarching values, socio-economic equality, isolation, and traditions.

method to attain democratic stability, because "the realistic choice is . . . between consociational democracy and no democracy at all." *(Democracy, 238)*

On the basis of this insight, not only does Lijphart make a theoretical plea for political engineering of plural societies in the direction of consociationalism, but also a practical attempt. Invited by the Legislative Assembly of KwaZulu-as Plato by the rulers of Syracuse-he advised a consociational solution for South Africa. In a paper published for the South African Political Science Association he compares the British majority rule with the consociational model and gives preference to the latter because in the British model there would be dominance of one group over the other." Between the elites of the different ethnic groups of a plural society there should be accommodation, not dominance. He adds that "the possibilities of consociational democracy should be very seriously considered before the drastic solution of partition is attempted"[18] (in South Africa partition is territorial "apartheid" in the so-called Bantustans). In another address to a similar audience he goes one step further: "among the many ways of implementing consociational principles, federalism is a particularly promising method and deserves special attention."[18] A few years later Lijphart publicly complained that the South African government, because of its policies of partition, abused his ideas.[20] Elsewhere he makes it clear that the ignoring of the black population and the denial of effective veto-power to the colored and Indian people are incompatible with consociational thinking.[21]

COLLECTED CRITICISMS

Lijphart's theory has to date been criticized principally from three perspectives: the lack of conceptual clarity or the imprecisions and

17. In Rhoodie, 1978, 27-43. More about South Africa, but not on consociationalism in A. Lijphart, "Language, Religion, Class and Party Choice: Belgium, Canada, Switzerland, and South Africa Compared," in different versions published in both R. Rose (ed.), *Electoral Participation* (London: Sage, 1980), 283-328 and the *American Political Science Review* 73 (2, 1979), 442-58. See also Boulle, 1981.

18. In Rhoodie, 1978, 33.

19. Lijphart, 1979-B, 515.

20. Dutch newspaper *NRC-Handelsblad,* May 18, 1982. Same point in *Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1982* (Johannesburg: South African Institute of Race Relations, 1983), 4.

21. Lijphart, 1981-A, 139.

mutability of key concepts; the difficulty of operationalizing or measuring crucial elements of consociational democracy; and the absence of scientific attributes or qualities. We turn now to these criticisms which are set forth at various places in the literature dealing with consociational democracy.

Conceptualizations

We shall discuss here the following five conceptualizations: pluralism (as being the genus to which pillarization belongs), democracy, stability, accommodation, and the so-called favorable conditions. These five are crucial in Lijphart's own theory and together they form its full skeleton. Following Easton, our criterion of evaluation will be their usefulness for the understanding of politics in plural societies.[22]

Pluralism. Lijphart considers a society as plural if it is divided by segmental cleavages. But when is a division within a society a cleavage and when is a cleavage segmental? Or, to raise a delicate methodological question: on the basis of which criterion can one say that some division is *not* a cleavage and that a cleavage is *not* segmental? In his critical review of Lijphart's *Democracy in Plural Societies,* Jurg Steiner has tried to answer these questions.[23] Every society exposes, everywhere and always, cultural diversity: by language, class, or something else. Because of this univeralism the specific form of subcultural segmentation needs to be defined (and operationalized) very clearly. This is, however, not done by Lijphart, who makes use of a mixture of elements. Sometimes he refers to outward isolation of groups, sometimes to inward cohesion; he shifts between degrees of segmentation, as though any degree is still quite distinct from universal cultural diversity. Criteria to assess when overarching loyalties and cross-cutting cleavages transform segmentation into universal diversity are not given. As long as this conceptual vagueness endures, according to Steiner, "there will always be confusion about the validity of the theory."[24] Subsequently he advises us to forget about pluralism and "to extend the theory from plural to non-plural societies,"[25] thereby treating pluralism

22. D. Easton, *A Framework for Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1965).

23. Steiner, 1981-A.

24. *Mid., 344.*

25. *Ibid.*

simply as one variable of the consociational theory. In his review of the same book G. Bingham Powell, Jr. raised a similar point: "Little, if any, attention is in fact paid to intra-segment political processes."[28] Is there really no diversity within a so-called segment and, if it exists, is it then overruled by external antagonisms? Lijphart seems to suggest only positive answers.

In Lijphart's theory the concept of cross-cutting cleavages is important because, if such cross-cutting is missing, political instability is the prospect for a plural society. The only alternative to cross-cutting cleavages is, then, prudent leadership. However, Sten Nilson points out that cross-cutting cleavages can also endanger, instead of improve, political stability.[27] What will happen depends on the intensity of a polarized dimension. Especially where the political order is dynamic, the rise of a salient issue, which cross-cuts existing cleavages, can bring society into a turmoil.

Democracy. Lijphart uses different concepts of democracy. In his first book he refers to the election process, in the second to Dahl's concept of polyarchy. Between the two there exist, of course, important differences: for Dahl elections are only one element of polyarchy among many. In his first conceptualization Lijphart leaves open the possibilities that political parties fully control the recruitment of candidates for an election; that in the interelection period the relationships between electors and elected are almost nonexistent or antagonistic; that elites' opinions and behavior are nonrepresentative of the people's demands; and that elite-politics is full of secrecy and immune to popular control. But for many leading theorists on democracy these possibilities are hardy distinguishable from the concepts of authoritarian or even totalitarian rule.[28]

Lijphart's more recent definition-Dahl's concept of polyarchy -is certainly more comprehensive. Most of the possibilities mentioned above are already excluded by definition. In a polyarchy the recruitment is more-or-less open; active relationships exist between electors and elected, the elite's opinions and behavior are more or

26. In *American Political Science Review* 73 (1, 1979), 296.

27. S. Nilson, "Toward a Theory of Cross-Cutting Cleavages," paper *International Political Science Association, Moscow,* 1979. Same point, but weaker in Barry, 1975-B, 487.

28. From the ubiquity of literature: D. Thompson, *The Democratic Citizen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970); J. Roland Pennock, *Democratic Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

less representative, and there are continuous possibilites for popular control. The irony, however, is that the concept of polyarchy, if strictly taken, is incompatible with the consociational model-a fact which Lijphart does not seem to fully appreciate. In a polyarchy, competition between elites is, more than anything else, essential; in a consociation, the antithesis of competition, i.e., intense collaboration, is crucial.[29]

Stability. This concept too is defined differently in the two books by Lijphart. In the first book it is called "the capabilities to sufficiently meet demands." As indicators of such effective problem solving he mentions the absence of revolution, violence, or disaffection and the presence of Cabinet-stability and constitutional continuity.

There is, however, neither a logical nor a close empirical relationship between effective problem solving on the one hand and these indicators on the other. With or without revolution, violence or disaffection, elites can fail (or not) to meet societal demands; and with or without the presence of the positive indicators, they can be either effective or ineffective in the ratification of demands. The reason is that many other factors exist that can determine the elites' problem solving effectiveness. And besides, especially in consociational countries, the proposed indicators can remain "invisible," which seriously limits their usefulness. For example the attitudinal antagonisms (negative indicators) are supposed to be isolated or segmented from each other: they are present but hidden and not at top level but at pillar level. The realities of Cabinet stability and constitutional continuity (positive indicators) usually are that an exceptional amount of political energy repetitiously has to be invested in the production of accommodation and that its agreements have a rather informal status: low degrees of stability and continuity then remain "invisible."

In his second book *(Democracy),* Lijphart refers to two other authors for the meaning of his concept of stability. Here the problem is that the one author (Leon Hurwitz) discusses not one but several conceptualizations of stability, so that it is unclear to which conceptualization Lijphart refers. What is more, Hurwitz concludes that "the concept of political stability remains as elusive as other abstract

29. And there are other important differences. For example: In a polyarchy citizens can be participative and critical; in a consociation they are always passive and deferent. See R.A. Dahl, *A Preface to Democratic Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956); Dahl, *Polyarchy, op. cit.,* 142 sees nevertheless the Netherlands as a peculiar polyarchy.

concepts. ..."[30] And the other author (Harry Eckstein), providing four dimensions of stability (system maintenance, civil order, legitimacy, and efficiency), evaluates his own conceptualization as "tentative ideas . . . everything treated in them should be regarded as provisional. ..."[31] Lijphart, however, takes both conceptualizations for granted. Without discussion he adopts Eckstein's dimensions, although these are located at the level of "the polity," a term which refers to the whole system. Among others Adriano Pappalardo points out that in a consociation the relevant level of analysis is not something like "the polity," but both the level of the single segments and the relationships between these.[32] The reason is that a segment may break down, while the overall system persists-or the opposite, when one segments starts overruling the others. For this reason, Eckstein's analysis and discussion of system maintenance appears somewhat inappropriate in Lijphart's context. Similar observations can be made about the other dimensions: in a consociation civil disorder is usually more directed towards the competing segments than towards "the polity," the sense of legitimacy is more related to the pillar-leaders than to the overarching polity, and efficacy ("prompt and relevant decision-making and implementation," according to Eckstein'3) is more an affair of "the autonomous segments" (Lijphart) than of the whole polity. In short, Lijphart's second concept of stability is neither developed out of his theory of consociationalism nor very: useful for the evaluation of consociations.

Accommodation. In both his books Lijphart considers accommodation to be the essence of consociational stability. In the first book *(Politics)* he conceives it as a matter of "spirit" of cooperation among the elites of the different pillars; in the second, primarily as "a grand coalition" and, additionally, as the existence of a mutual veto, proportionality, and segmental autonomy (in short, one can say, as institutionalized segmentation). As he makes clear in his typology of systems, which was mentioned earlier, accommodation should be seen as a non-competitive style of elites, as the opposite of elite-competition.

Brian Barry points out that the concept is much more than a tool

30. Hurwitz, *op. cit.,* 461; see also Pedersen, 1982.
31. Eckstein, op. *cit., 6.*
32. Pappalardo, 1981.
33. Eckstein, *op. cit.,* 65.

to understand plural societies.[34] It contains a whole theory in disguise and the introduction of theory-laden terms he considers to be "hazardous" because it very much limits their usefulness. In this regard he points out that if one of the elements implied in the theory-laden term is not fulfilled, the whole concept becomes useless. In the case of Lijphart's concept of political accommodation at least two packages of elements are involved. One is related to the broader concept of consociational democracy: accommodation is the type of elite cooperation in societies characterized by segmentation, low consensus between the segments, decisive issues, segmental isolation, et cetera. Or, as Barry paraphrases Lijphart: "the elites of rival subcultures are willing and able to accommodate the divergent interests and demands, because they are committed to the maintenance of the system and they see the need for accommodation as a means to this."[35] The other package of elements, contained by the concept of accommodation, involves the so-called rules of the game. Proportionality, veto power, and so forth are seen as "essential aspects of the elite accommodation."[3e] Because of these two packages, the concept of accommodation is not a more-or-less technical tool to understand politics-let alone a variable-but an "implicit theory, that under conditions of dissensus and segmentation, *only* elite accommodation . . . can produce stability."[37]

To put it in different terms: the implied norm of elite cooperation has not been formulated after extensive empirical research in plural societies-out of which the compelling conclusion could have risen that accommodation indeed is a necessary and sufficient condition for stability-but the norm has been formulated in advance, on the basis of deviant (Dutch) case analysis. One of the clearest examples of this bias is provided by the idea of prudent leadership: Lijphart not only believes he observes elite cooperation, but also suggests he already knows the elites' motive for cooperation, namely prudence. The apodictic status of the concept of accommodation is also illustrated by the complete lack of any elaboration of the counter-concept of political competition. In spite of all the assumed conflicts in a plural society, competition at elite level is implicitly supposed not to exist and not to need any conceptualization.

Conditions. In his comparative analyses of plural societies

34. Barry, 1975-B.
35. *Ibid.,* 480.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.,* 480-81.

Lijphart has listed a variable number (six to nine) of favorable conditions for the development of consociational democracy. The main methodological problem here is that they are "empty." In Lijphart's own words they are helpful but neither indispensable nor sufficient nor unique for consociations nor necessarily present in consociations. He treats them as an aggregate: the more conditions present, the better the chances for consociational democracy. An aggregate, however, presupposes that there are fixed single items, which can be aggregated. But Lijphart's single items are empty: the conditions may be present and absent, necessary and unnecessary, in short conditions or not conditions at all. If this conclusion is wrong, and Lijphart is right, it should be possible to predict, on the basis of the presence or absence of the conditions, the chances of elite cooperation occurring in a plural society. The poor results of such a test of the predictive power of Lijphart's conditions will be mentioned below.

Measurements

A criticism repeatedly made is that the crucial elements of consociationalism have not been operationalized by Lijphart; that, more specifically, the main concepts are loosely formulated (not to mention the minor concepts), that they are often based on implicit theoretical thinking, sometimes badly adapted to the complexities of the plural society to be studied, and that their indicators, in so far as they are mentioned, are often just as loosely formulated, theoretically biased, and not accurate measures of the complexities in consociational politics.

The qualities of the conceptual tools create, of course, problems for empirical measurements. Lijphart has evaded these problems by leaving almost all empirical research to others. Both his study on the Netherlands and his cross-national analysis of plural societies are hardly based on results obtained after the application of methods and techniques of empirical research. His "method" has been called by Jurg Steiner "the impressionistic method." [38]

This peculiar method does not by itself disqualify the conclusions which Lijphart draws regarding plural societies. Weak methods can also produce strong results, but the chance is much smaller than when the toolbox of scientific research is fully opened and used. On

38. Steiner, 1981-A, 346; see also Steiner, 1981-B.

this score, the best we can and should do is to compare Lijphart's conclusions with those of other authors. The more unanimity there is, the better the chances that Lijphart with his impressionistic method has after all yielded results, which can meet the standard of intersubjective acceptance.

As Barry has done with the Swiss case,[39] we shall concentrate on the Dutch case. There are several reasons for this choice: the Dutch case has been the starting-point of the consociational democracy theory; the evaluation of Lijphart's many descriptions of other countries can best be left to the respective country-specialists; and we are most familiar with the Dutch case.

We shall present different views and data regarding the following crucial elements of the Dutch case: the structure of society, mass attitudes and behavior, elite behavior, political stability, democracy, and favorable conditions; to these we add alleged omissions.

The structure of societies. Initially, Duch pillarization was mainly a sociologist's concern. Their level of analysis was the group level, not the State or the individual. They were struck by the structure and basis of group memberships-particularly school organizations, welfare organizations, professional and labor organizations, mass media, and leisure organizations-and how they recruited their members from different social categories, particularly religion and class. At the time (the end of the fifties) these sociologists started to write about social depillarization and related changes, political scientists entered the field and started to write about political segmentation and accommodation. According to such sociologists as Kruyt and Verwey-Jonker the pillarization was, however, already seriously weakening: the Catholic pillar was changing from within and lost members; the Protestant pillar was not only more split by internal divisions than the other pillars but also changing towards ecumenial cooperation with other denominations; and the non-confessional pillars, according to these authors, had always been less pillarized (particularly the Liberals).[40] Increasing numbers of people abstained from convergent memberships and preferred cross-cutting memberships (for example: Catholic school plus secular sports club).

Van de Kaa notices that the real demographic distances between

39. Barry, 1975-B.

40. Kruyt, 1959; Verwey-Jonker, 1957. See also *Sociologische Gids,* 1979 and Bryant, 1981.

the so-called pillars (measured in terms of convivium and the like) have, in the post-war period, been much smaller than Lijphart suggests.[41] Obliquely Lijphart also remarks that the secular pillars are of minor importance, that the Protestant pillar has internal divisons, that religion and class partly cross-cut one another, and that class in itself is a weak factor. (*Politics* 1968, ch. 2) Nevertheless he stresses cleavages, internal cohesion and external isolation. According to Steininger "pillarization in the Netherlands [has been more] a party-political phenomenon, . . . [than] a denominational one."[42] But even at party level there was no clear cut pillarization by either religion or class. To be sure, the Catholic party was strongly supported by Catholics-and in this respect it is the clearest example of pillarization[43]-but in 1964 only 60 percent of the Catholics had an outspoken preference for the Catholic Party and all other parties had Catholics among their voters (*Politics* 1968, 31)[44]; already in the fifties these distributions were changing to the disadvantage of the Catholic Party.[45] While all the other parties were mixed, although biased, with respect to religion, the Catholic Party was extremely mixed by class. The other parties were more biased by class, although no party recruited its voters from only one socio-economic or occupational segment.[4e] (*Politics* 1968, 27-29) In short: while pillarization is more a party-political than a denominational phenomenon, it is not even a clear-cut phenomenon at party-level. Every party had its own mixture, however biased it may have been, of groups different by class or religion.

Both Scholten and Kieve remark that during the alleged era of pillarization there has not been any important religious or socio-economic issue that cleaved the political scene.[47] Lijphart would answer: thanks to the success of accommodation; but then, accommodation of what? Scholten also notices that in several societal sectors (particularly the occupational groupings) there have always been cross-cutting structures and sometimes (e.g., in the case of the

41. D. Van De Kaa, "Bevolking: asymmetrisehe tolerantie of accomodatiepolitiek," in *Nederland na 1945* (Deventer: van Loghum Slaterus, 1980), 82-101.

42. Steininger, 1977, 252.

43. Coleman, 1978; Bakvis, 1981.

44. If one recalculates the percentages in the other direction.

45. Kruyt, 1959, 28.

46. If one recalculates the percentages in the other direction.

47. Scholten, 1980; Kieve, 1981.

employers) there was hardly anything to cross-cut because pillarization was weak.[48]

Mass attitudes and behavior. Most of the people hardly participate in politics and they behave deferentially. This is not only true of the Netherlands during the so-called pillarization, but also for any country under normal circumstances.[48] So the relevant question here is: has there been slightly less participation and more deference than, for example, in the post-pillarization period of the seventies? Reliable and comparative data-sets based on identical conceptualizations do not exist. In the seventies there has been an increase in so-called protest groups and a decrease of participation through the membership of institutionalized organizations, but what does this change mean for the total level of participation? The vote-rate, another possible indicator, cannot be relied upon, because, before the seventies, a formal obligation existed to go to the ballot box. Lijphart mentions that more than 85 percent of the voters did not have a nominal voice in the composition of the party lists; but in the seventies less than ten percent of the people are registered party members and (an estimated) one to two percent are active party members.[50] In a 1954 poll more than 40 percent of the respondents said they regularly read the newspapers about parliamentary matters; but in a 1981 poll 50 percent of the respondents said they read in the newspapers about governmental problems-a much broader topic than merely parliamentary affairs.[51] In 1954, 50 percent of the people were said to be very or fairly interested in politics; but since 1972 this percentage has risen to 63 percent (1981).[52] Lijphart mentions that 54 percent of the respondents of a 1964 poll said they would not object if Parliament were to adopt a law which they considered to be unjustified or harmful; but in 1973, 72 percent of the respondents said that such a

48. In his review of *The Politics of Accommodation,* 1960 in the *American Political Science Review* 62 (4, 1968), 1349-51 the Dutch A. Hoogerwerf remarks: "cross-cutting is camouflaged."

49. L. Milbrath and M. Goel, *Political Participation* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1977, second edition) for comparative literature.

50. R. Koole, "Politieke partijen: de leden en het geld," in *Documentatie-centrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen, Jaarboek 1981* (Groningen: Universiteit van Groningen, 1982), 1-95.

51. *De Nederlandse kiezer* (Den Haag: Staatsuitgeverij, 1956); C. van der Eijk and others, *Dutch Parliamentary Election Study 1981* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 1981).

52. See note 51 above.

law should not be obeyed.[53] (*Politics* 1968, 151) Another indicator of mass deference Lijphart uses is the vote-support for the larger ("established") parties: between 1918 and 1963 it varied between 87 percent and 95 percent; after 1963 it varied between 71 percent and 87 percent.[54] (*Politics* 1968, 162) Lijphart considers the high number of individual memberships of institutionalized organizations to be an indicator of political satisfaction. (*Politics* 1968, 150) But Scholten and Kieve, among others, point out that these organizations did create enduring memberships not only by rewards, but also by punishments to their members, especially in the fields of housing,[55] schooling, health care, welfare provisions, and social assistance. Kieve also refers to the militancy of the lower classes in the interbellum and afterwards.[55]

In short, the whole picture of deference and passivity, as described by Lijphart, needs much more differentiation and precision. The same applies to the picture of overarching loyalties. On the one hand they are said to be strong enough to provide some basic and minimal consensus ("favorable condition"), but on the other hand Lijphart considers them to be so weak that the elites have to create real consensus. (*Politics* 1968, ch. 5)

Elite behavior. Lijphart characterizes the behavior of the elites as a spirit of accommodation, a grand coalition, specific rules of the game, and prudence. But whatever the structure of society, the structure of the electoral system (extreme proportional representation, free entry of new parties, no threshold for mini-parties) is such that in the resulting multi-party system (usually there are 10 to 14 parties in Parliament, and all have always had a minority status) cooperation is inevitable to create a majority, either for Cabinet formation or for legislation. So, more important than any "spirit" is the objective need to cooperate. Daudt points out that such a spirit of accommodation has never even existed.[57] The elites of the parties treat each other not as equal partners, but as unequal competitors.

53. *De Nederlandse Kiezer 1973* (Alphen aan den Rijn: Samson, 1973), 60.

54. M.P.C.M. Van Schendelen, "Crisis of the Dutch Welfare State," in *Contemporary Crisis 7 (2,* 1983), 209-30.

55. Scholten, 1980, 351; Kieve, 1981.

56. Kieve, 1981, 330.

57. H. Daudt, "De ontwikkeling van de politieke machtsverhoudingen in Nederland sinds 1945," in *Nederland na 1945* (Deventer: Van Loghum Slaterus, 1980), 186. See also A. De Swaan, "The Netherlands: Coalitions in a Segmented Polity," in E. Browne and J. Dreijmanis (eds.), *Government Coalitions in Western Democracies* (New York: Longmans, 1982), 217-36; Van den Berg en Molleman, 1974.

In fact, the confessional and liberal parties have often shown a preference for leaving the Socialists in the opposition and for monopolizing political power. A real "grand coalition," that is, all major parties in one Cabinet-has never existed. The best one can say is, as Hoogerwerf does, that policy distances at elite level were smaller than at mass level, but his data relate to 1963, a year in which political change at mass level already became manifest.[58] As to the specific rules of the game, Scholten among others remarks that they are hardly unique in politics.[50] Most elites, almost always and everywhere, have an inclination to summit diplomacy, to secrecy, to depoliticization if this is opportune, to do politics as a business-like job, to agree to disagree in order to make compromises, to allocate more-or-less proportionally, and to accept the government's title to rule. The proposition of prudence, finally, is most difficult to assess. Within Lijphart's model it is a logical proposition, but the relevant question is whether this prudence is also empirically true. Lijphart does not provide any data about this "black-box" variable.

Stability. In terms of Lijphart's negative indicators the Netherlands can be said to have been a stable country., For the Netherlands Taylor and Hudson report low scores on political protest, riots, armed attacks, and other signs of violence.[80] But this was also true for many of the decades before 1917. During the interbellum there have, however, been many strikes, which at least indicate socio-economic instability.[01] In terms of positive indicators Lijphart considers the Netherlands to be stable as well. But the real facts about Cabinet stability are that between 1917 and 1967 there have been 23 different Cabinets (almost every two years a new one), of which only four completed their regular terms of four years. And even these experienced some perodic crises resulting in resignation or in a change of the Cabinet. During the interbellum the country was ruled by a caretaker-government for an average of 27 days a year; after the Second World War this average increased to more than one month (33 days) a year. These facts can hardly be said to indicate political stability. On the contrary, according to Kieve, the reality is one of "political immobilism and deep inter-elite divisions."[B2] Next

58. A. Hoogerwerf, "Sociaal-politieke strijdpunten; smeulend vuur," in *Sociologische Gids* 10 (2, 1963), 249-63.

59. Scholten, 1980, 332-35.

60. C. Taylor and M. Hudson, *World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), chapter 3.

61. Fennema, 1976, 66.

62. Kieve, 1981, 326.

to manifest instability, there has always been latent instability: in a coalition-government within a multi-party system there is a permanent danger that some partner in the coalition shifts its loyalties. Usually, more-or-less detailed agreements between the parties-in-coalition had to be concluded before the Cabinet could start and many additional negotiations had to be carried out during the Cabinet's existence. Even now this is the case.

Constitutional continuity-that other positive but undefined indicator of stability-is difficult to measure. In its narrow sense the (written) constitution has always undergone change, usually -because of the specific procedure of its change-at the time of the regular elections. In the broader sense of "the ordering and dividing of the exercise of political power,"[e3] constitutional change has become an even more important characteristic of Dutch politics, especially after the Second World War. In constructing the welfare-polity much of the power necessary to make binding decisions has shifted from the autonomous and private organizations to the public system. By the delegation of legislation a good deal of power has shifted from the Parliament to the Government and its public bureaucracy. Moreover, with the development of the European Community, decision-making authority in a variety of policy fields is now exerted at the European level. Because Lijphart did not specify his concept of continuity, it is impossible to conclude whether these fundamental changes indicate continuity or not. But at least they indicate constitutional dynamics, which have resulted-within a few decades-in a very different political order.

On the second set of Lijphart's elements of stability (borrowed from Eckstein) the remark has already been made that these elements lack any operationalization, or in any case one which is widely accepted as useful. They do, however, bear a close relationship to other concepts which have already been examined, namely, system maintenance with constitutional continuity, civil order with the absence of violence, and legitimacy ("worthy of support") with deference. The fourth element of stability, decisional efficacy, conceived as "the prompt and relevant making and implementing of decision," is not very characteristic of Dutch politics. Lijphart himself observed that in a consociation the time-costs of decision-making are very high and that much decision-making is left to autonomous segments.[84] *(Democracy, 47-52)*

63. C.J. Friedrich, *Limited Government* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1974), 21.

64. Also in Rhoodie, 1978, 39.

Democracy. Looking at the practices of Dutch politics, with their rules of secrecy and depoliticization, Lee Dutter poses the rhetorical question: "can the Netherlands really be called a democracy?[65] According to the standard of regular elections, the country has been and still is a democracy. But, as said above, this conceptualization of democracy is very narrow and nowadays hardly accepted as useful. According to the broader standards of polyarchy-a concept which, as remarked above, is not very compatible with the idea of elite-accommodation-the country's democratic nature shows many shortcomings.

The greatest imperfections appear as soon as one begins to use the standard of participatory democracy. The construction of a Cabinet has always been an elite affair. In almost all cases of serious Cabinet-crises new elections were not held (as the Constitution permits) and the reconstruction of the Cabinet remained an elite affair. The fairly closed elite system has been described by Daalder as an oligarchy ("regentensfeer"), characterized by mutual distrust and disaffection between the rulers and the ruled.[86] The 1967 election study shows indeed high percentages of people who consider the political system as being, in some respects, not highly democratic: MPs do not bother very much about what the people demand (64 percent of the respondents), referenda should be held (61 percent), and the prime-minister should be elected (50 percent).[67] Based on the same questionnaire Van Putten reports dissatisfaction with the practices of politics (37 percent), the MPs (34 percent) and the political parties (36 percent).[88] After his analysis of the relationships between Government and Parliament, Geismann concludes that the Netherlands has a limited democracy, because the political and parliamentary elites in fact do not behave as representatives of the voters and because the political control over the Cabinet is weak.[8o] Using Dahl's model of polyarchy Daudt concludes that "because of obsolete structures . . . the political demands and activities of the citizens are, through the political parties, insufficiently reflected in representative and executive bodies."[70] In Dahl's own rank-order of

65. Dutter, 1978, 565.
66. Daalder, 1974-A, 13.
67. *De Nederlandse kiezers in* 1967 (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1967).
68. J. Van Putten, *Ontevredenheid over Politiek* (Meppel: Boom, 1971).
69. Geismann, 1964, 234-39.
70. H. Daudt, "Recente opvattingen over democratic," in *Democratie Anno* 1967 (Meppel: Boom, 1967), 43.

polyarchies, the Netherlands (for the year 1969) scores far from perfect and appears to be behind such countries as Jamaica, Costa Rica and France.[71] Taking the list of definitional characteristics of a polyarchy,[72] one sees that, according to the 1967 poll, 46 percent of the respondents do not see any difference between the competing parties; that, according to Hudson and Taylor, there exist, in the mid-sixties, some imperfections of press freedom; that political knowledge and interest are unequally distributed among the people; that majority-formation is not an electoral but an elite affair; that the elected elites are repetitiously overruled by the non-elected elites in the government or elsewhere; and that only in a narrow and indirect sense the elections control the interelection decisions.[7a] The lack of mass participation in Dutch politics during the interelection periods has already been observed above, where the people's deferent and non-participatory behavior was discussed. Direct forms of mass participation were always incidental (e.g. demonstrations) or kept under strict political control (e.g. public advisory committees).

In his first book Lijphart poses the rhetorical question: "is it fair to measure the quality of Dutch democracy against the standards of the ideal model?" *(Politics* 1968, 179) Perhaps it is not (and at least not very useful), but in that case he should have treated democracy as a variable and should have avoided the apodictical statement that the Netherlands really is a democracy. As with stability, its democratic nature is in need of far greater refinement.

Conditions. Pappalardo has made a comparative analysis, which includes the Netherlands, of the conditional nature of Lijphart's conditions for a consociational democracy.[74] His general conclusion is that only two conditions seem to have conditional status: stability among subcultures, and elite predominance over a deferential and organizationally encapsulated following. He also remarks that these two conditions have not had constant values, but that they are variables and that their dependent variable (consociational democracy) should have reflected that variety. Regarding size and traditions, which Pappalardo considers as not conditional, we finally refer to Dahl and Tufte who, also discussing the case of the Netherlands, have hesitant conclusions about any straight relation-

71. Dahl, *Polyarchy, op. cit.,* Appendix B.

72, Dahl, *Preface, op. cit.,* 84.

73, See note 68 above, 63; Taylor and Hudson, *World Handbook, op. cit.,* 51.

74. Pappalardo, 1981.

ship between size and democracy,[75] as well as to Daalder who, following many historians, has stressed repeatedly that oligarchic rule already existed before there was pillarization,[70] and to Van Schendelen who observed, in the mid-seventies, the return ("restoration") of traditional elements of elite-politics.[77] On the basis of these observations it may be concluded that, apparently, elitist traditions and consociational democracy can be very unrelated to each other.

Omissions. Some authors have stressed that important political variables have been overlooked by Lijphart. Manifold are the mentions of the role of bureaucracy and the build-up of the State's welfare sector.[78] Although the pillarized elites tried to influence and control both the bureaucracy and the welfare system, these efforts soon appeared to score only limited success. The bureaucracy became one of the main objects of depoliticization: party spoils ought to be kept out. Because of this the public bureaucracy could develop itself as one of the first and main depillarized structures and, thanks to the growth of its powers and resources, with increasing autonomy. The rapid growth of general welfare provisions since the mid-fifties weakened the exchange-relationship between the pillars' elites and their adherents, especially regarding health, housing and allowances for unemployment, disablement and sickness, old age, and social assistance.7[0] Fennema is one of the many who stress that historical factors of pillarization and accommodation have insufficiently been taken into account by Lijphart. For this reason, these authors have doubts about Lijphart's thesis that the accommodation started around 1917.[80] Other omissions Fennema notes are the underestimation of foreign pressures and international circumstances, including the two World Wars; the under-exposure of the economic growth and development of the country, with its impressive rise of big multinational firms; the neglect of the changing role of the State, which increasingly intervened in the society;

75. R. Dahl and E. Tufte, *Size and Democracy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973).

76. Daalder, 1966; Daalder, 1974-A; Daalder, 1981. See also De Jong, 1957; Stuurman, 1981.

77. Van Schendelen, 1978. See also *Sociologische Gids,* 1979.

78. For example, S. Verba, "Some dilemmas in Comparative Research," in *World Politics* 19, (1, 1967), 123.

79. T. Braakman, M.P.C.M. Van Schendelen and R. Schotten, *Sociale Zekerheid in Nederland* (Utrec: Aula, 1984).

80. Fennema, 1976; see also note 76 above.

and the failure to pay any attention to political socialization with the result that mass-culture is presented as almost unrelated to the social order.[81] That the international environment traditionally has been an important determinant (integrating factor) of the Dutch political system and should have been given more attention by Lijphart, has also been argued by Daalder.[82]

A more general omission, observed by many authors mentioned above, is the lack of variability and dynamics in Lijphart's description of Dutch politics. Fifty years of Dutch politics have been described as almost constant and static. Lijphart does not provide complete data-series, which might prove that, indeed, Dutch politics have been constant and static. Instead he uses data from very different years and decades and he puts them together into one picture of politics. At the same time he frames this picture with the break-points of 1917 and 1967, thus suggesting extreme variability and dynamics before and after the period in question.

Scientific Qualities

Here we shall discuss four aspects of scientific quality: the theory's validity, its verifiability, its predictive power, and its applicative potential.

Validity. That Lijphart's analysis is widely contested now, is at least partly due to his method, which has been described by Jurg Steiner as "impressionistic" and Lee Dutter as "largely inductive."[83] In their view, Lijphart has presented an interesting interpretation of how, through prudent leadership, a pluralistic society can become stable and democratic. But, instead of rigorous theory construction and testing, he based his ideas on illustrations from Dutch political life. And in this endeavor, it is contended, he used selective and incomplete illustrations of doubtful authenticity.

When Lijphart presented his ideas for the first time, he saw the Dutch case as an almost unique one. Later on he started seeing consociational democracies almost all over the world. By now, critical studies have been written about some of the many other alleged consociational democracies. On Switzerland, for example, Jurg Steiner and Jeffrey Obler - two members of the "consociational democracy

81. Fennema, 1976.
82. Daalder in McRae, 1974, 107.
83. Steiner, 1981-A, 346; Dutter, 1978, 566.

school" - report that "the theory is certainly not clearly rejected. It appears to be a plausible explanation . . . . But several reservations are in order."[84] Their claim, not that the theory should be confirmed, but that it should not be rejected is, of course, minimal. Their report is a reply to Brian Barry, who is much more outspoken: "I propose to argue . . . 1. that Switzerland provides no support for the theory of consociational democracy, 2. that the Austrian case is less clear-cut than is often assumed, 3. that Belgium and the Netherlands, although plausible supporting cases, still fall short of fully bearing out the theory, and 4. that the relevance of the consociational model for other divided societies is much more doubtful than is commonly supposed."[85]

Verifiability. In a logical analysis of Lijphart's theory of consociational democracy, as presented in the *Politics of Accommodation,* Boynton and Kwon come to the conclusion that the theory is not yet developed well enough to meet the test of verification.[86] According to them, the theory, first of all, does not specify under what conditions consociational democracy occurs, though in his second book Lijphart has made an effort to do this. Secondly, they maintain, elite-accommodation does not necessarily follow from a segmented structure of society: "at best the argument is incomplete." Thirdly, they hold, what Lijphart writes is the reverse of what he implies. Accommodation is not a necessary and sufficient condition for stable democracy, as he claims it is, but, quite the reverse, a stable democracy is a necessary and sufficient condition for accommodation. If the population is deferent and passive, if the antagonistic segments are isolated from each other and produce only few divisive issues, and if the elites tend to converge their policy-views, then there is already stability in the country, even in Lijphart's own terminology of "problem-solving capacity." Fourthly, they argue, to become logical the reasoning should be extended with the assumption that the elites are willing to discount their own views of what should be done about political problems. Indirectly, the authors point to the possibility of tautology in Lijphart's analysis. Sometimes the concepts of consociational democracy and elite-accommodation

84. J. Steiner and J. Obler, "Does the Consociational Theory Really Hold for Switzerland?", in Esman, 1977, 340.
85. Barry, 1975-B, 481.
86. Boynton and Kwon, 1978.

are being used by Lijphart as identical. In that case, however, the one can never produce the other.

Other circular reasoning is found in Lijphart's second book, *(Democracy).* About Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland he remarks: "These countries are now retreating from their high point of consociational development . . . (but) not . . . as a result of the failure of consociational democracy, but because consociationalism by its very success has begun to make itself superfluous." *(Democracy, 2-3)* What does this mean? One possibility is that Lijphart means that accommodation has become so successful that in the end all segmentations and cleavages of the society will be solved, in which case there is no need any more for further accommodation. This suggests that political change in the sixties has been a performance of the elite-politics of accommodation, a suggestion which is not only factually wrong, but also contrary to Lijphart's own description of what happened in the sixties. It is an example of circular reasoning as well, because an apparently stable democracy (the outcome of accommodation) produces stable democracy (the superfluity of accommodation). Another possible interpretation of the statement is that the political change of the sixties, with all its indicators of instability (violence, protest behavior, the high turnover of elites), this time did not result in the need for elite-accommodation (the so-called self-denying prophecy), but permitted non-accommodation. But then instability can result in either accommodation or non-accommodation. However realistic this conclusion may be, it weakens Lijphart's argument, because the conditions under which the one or the other occurs must be spelled out for the sake of theoretical coherence.

Predictive power. Lijphart remarks that "the predictive power" of his theory is "rather limited. Elite behavior seems to be more elusive and less susceptible to empirical generalization than mass phenomena." *(Democracy,* 54) Whether this last sentence is true or not, a usual standard of theoretical quality is that it possesses predictive power. Lijphart's own prediction, written in 1969, for the near future of Dutch politics, appears to be wrong: while the political culture changed from fragmented into non-fragmented, he assumed the style of elite-politics to remain the same (non-competitive). But the system in fact developed towards a highly competitive elite-system.[87] So, there is something important missing in his theory. It is

87. Daalder, 1974-A, part II; Van Schendelen, 1978; Dutter, 1978; Middendorp, 1979; *Sociologische Gids,* 1979; Daudt, De ontwikkeling, *op. cit.*

interesting to note that, while Lijphart regards the elite behavior of 1917 as dependent on the then existing instabilities, he predicted the opposite for the seventies; namely, an elite behavior independent from the then existing instabilities.

The predictive weakness of the theory also appears from Pappalardo's test of the "favorable conditions."[88] Only two conditions-and only under reservations-showed a relationship with the outcome of consociationalism.

Applicative potential. Lijphart himself seems to attach more value to the theory's potential for engineering societies than to any other criterion of science. *(Democracy,* 55) If elite-accommodation in a segmented society produces stable democracy, the theory is considered to be good in both an empirical and a normative sense.

Brian Barry has discussed Lijphart's proposals for Northern Ireland which, as mentioned above, were elite accommodation and, if the elites are unable to accommodate, partition of the country.[89] Barry replies that any effort to introduce consociationalism in Northern Ireland is not only unrealistic, but also dangerous because the accommodation ("compromising behavior") of the elites might provoke extremism of the middle-elites and adherents; and if the leaders of the segments are willing to solve the cleavages, a much simpler solution suggests itself, namely, that the Protestant majority makes conciliatory moves and that the Catholic minority responds in kind. Barry's comment does not imply, of course, that Lijphart's theory basically lacks engineering potential; its potential is only contested in this case.

The normative side of the theory has been discerned almost from the beginning. In his review of early consociational literature, Daalder observed its "danger of aprioristic normative notions."[90] A major problem for Barry is the implication that "*only* elite accommodation institutionalized in consociational devices can produce stability."[91] Any consociational counsellor, then, is very biased in his political engineering. To these points one can add the earlier concerns regarding the conceptualization of stability and, particularly, democracy. They are limited and do not contain modern elements as, for example, institutionalized mass-participation. Consociational democracy remains elitist democracy.

R. Pappalardo, 1981,

89. Barry, 1975-A on Lijphart, 1975-B; see also Hanf, 1982 and Hughes, 1982.

90. Daalder, 1974-B, 620.

91. Barry, 1975-B, 480.

CONCLUSIONS

The catalogue of collected criticisms raised against Lijphart's views demonstrates at least one thing: his views are widely and fundamentally contested. But the catalogue also demonstrates that Lijphart's views have been taken seriously and that they have at least provoked critical debate and analysis among scholars. This critical inquiry attests to the substance and importance of Lijphart's efforts.

Given all the collected criticisms, how valid and useful is Lijphart's main thesis, namely, that deeply divided societies can become stable and democratic as well, *if* the elites of the different segments of society effectively manage their conflicts through a system of mutual accommodation?

Lijphart himself does not seem to bother very much about all the criticisms. With reference to Gabriel Almond, he declares that " `choices in politics are constrained but indeterminate.' This conclusion may be disappointing for `political *science,* but for political problem solving there may be cause for satisfaction.' Consociational theory fits what Almond calls the `*political* science literature that stresses room for maneuver, ranges of freedom, the place for risk-taking.' " (*Democracy,* 55) Lijphart seems to be more concerned about the applicability or the engineering potential of his theory than about its political science validity. If, along the basic lines of his essential views, democratic stability could be realized in highly unstable countries, then the theory may be weak, but not wrong.

Very recently Lijphart himself has formulated seven points of criticism against his own theory.[92] Four of them mainly refer to *The Politics of Accommodation:* the ending of the Dutch politics of accommodation, at the end of the sixties, should have been elaborated more; pillarization is partly also a dependent variable, a construct by politicians; the factual pattern of Dutch consociationalism has shown more variations than suggested; and the Dutch case was correctly presented as a deviant case, but incorrectly as a unique case. The other three points of self-criticism are more related to *Democracy in Plural Societies:* a clearer distinction between crosscutting cleavages and crosscutting memberships should have been made; partition, as a technique of conflict-management,

92. A. Lijphart, "Time Politics of Accommodation: reflections, fifteen years later," in *Acta Politica* 19 (1, 1984).

should not be advocated so unconditionally as might have been suggested; and there seems to be less reason to apologize for the democratic quality of consociational democracies, although any alternative solution of societal conflicts would have been even less democratic.

His own conclusion about the impact these points of criticism should have on his theory, he puts as follows: "[they] are rather small modifications and clarifications. They do not affect the fundamental propositions of consociational theory. On the whole, I believe that the theory has stood the test of time and continues to be of value both empirically and prescriptively."[93] To the prescriptive assessment he adds, "I hear no better models being proposed . . . [I disagree] that the majoritarian model is more likely to work well in a plural society than the consociational model."[94]

Such modest and moderate formulations might save the basics of *The Politics of Accommodation* and *Democracy in Plural Societies.* Nothing more is being claimed now than that Dutch politics has been segmented to some degree during certain periods and that it has realized, thanks to some practices of accommodation, a degree of both political stability and democracy.

The empirical question, however, is whether the degree to which the Netherlands have been vertically segmented into different and competing minority groups, with all the dangers of political centrifugalism, has been high enough to legitimate the conclusion that the country is a paradoxical case of democratic stability and a deviant case, unexplainable by dominant theories of the fifties and the sixties.

The answer to this question is still open. Empirical political research in (or on) the country is still young and scarce. The spell which Lijphart's easy readable and fascinating analysis of Dutch politics has spread among Dutch scholars, has surely been more of a handicap than a stimulus for critical empirical research. Only very recently has critical debate among Dutch scholars started and historical research been undertaken.[95] Not before it is proven that the Netherlands has been a highly divided plural society and, at the same time, has met accepted international standards of stability and

93. *Ibid.*
94. *Ibid.*
95. On these new efforts M.P.C.M. Van Schendelen (ed.), *Consociationalism, Pillarization and Conflict-Management in the Low Countries* (Amsterdam: Boom, 1984.)

democracy, can this country be viewed as a paradoxical and deviant case. The same applies to any other assumed consociational country, whether it be Belgium, Austria, or Switzerland.

In sum, consociational democracy presents us with a challenging and provocative point of view. But, at the present time, it provides less than is needed for solid prescriptions for deeply divided societies anxiously searching for stable democracy. Perhaps, after rigorous analysis and evaluation, it might lead us to answers for problems confronting such societies. Any answers it might provide would certainly be highly valued by those who seek a stable, democratic political system.

Erasmus University, Rotterdam M.P.C.M. VAN SCHENDELEN

Appendix
Bibliography of Consociational Democracy

Although Lijphart can be said to be the most productive and imaginative author on consociationalism, he is by now only one among many. In the Netherlands particularly sociologists (Van Doorn, Ellemers, Kruijt, Thurlings) have presented basically similar analyses of the phenomenon of pillarization, even before Lijphart published his *The Politics of Accommodation,* but without his political explanation of accommodation. Some political scientists have presented variations *or* amendments of Lijphart's theory by stressing the historical dimension of Dutch pillarization (Daalder), the factor of effective elite-control (Van Schendelen), and the corporatistic structure of decision-making (Scholten).

On the international scene only one author can be said to have presented an analysis of plural societies basically similar to Lijphart's view. In 1967, one year before Lijphart's *The Politics of Accommodation,* Gerhard Lehmbruch published his *Proporz-demokratie, a* small booklet on Austria and Switzerland. In these plural societies social cleavages were said to be reconciled through political compromises at elite-level, by which political stability was performed. Interestingly enough, Lijphart and Lehmbruch have worked isolated from each other; neither refers to the other. While Lijphart afterwards became highly productive on consociationalism, Lehmbruch shifted to the partly related theme of corporatism.

In the rest of Europe the theme of consociationalism was soon taken up in especially Belgium (Huyse, Lorwin) and Austria (Steininger, Stiefbold) or placed in the more comparative perspective of "the smaller democracies" (Obler, Steiner, Dierickx, Esman, Tarrow).

Outside Europe, countries which have been placed in a consociational perspective, are Canada (McRae), Ghana and Lebanon (Smock and Smock) and South Africa (Rhoodie) . Broad comparative analyses, like Lijphart in his *Democracy in Plural Societies,* have been presented by Babushka and Shepsle and by Nordlinger.

Within one decade consociational thinking seems to have obtained its own domain in political theory, research and engineering. There exists a "Consociational Democracy School."

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