

CONSOCIATIONALISM: ITS ORIGIN, MEANING AND APPLICATION

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ÖZET - Almanca yazında "Proporzdemokratie" ya da "Konkordanzdemokratie", İngilizce yazında ise "segmented pluralism", "politics of accommodation", ya da "consociational democracy" biçiminde anıldığını da gördüğümüz "consociationalism", belirgin biçimde dikey kümelenme yapısı gösteren toplumlarda toplumsal barışı korumak ve çoğunluk buyuruculuğunu önlemek için düşünülmüş bir örgütlenme türüdür. Bu örgütlenme, büyük ortaklık yönetimine (grand coalitions), karşılıklı veto -ya da azınlık vetosu- kazanımına, kamu görevlerinin dağılımı ve ödeneklerin paylaşımında orantı temeline dayanılması, ve kümelerin, kendileriyle ilgili kararların alınışında özerk olmalarına, önemli ortak kararların alınışında ise seçkinlerce temsil edilmelerine dayanır.

Aşağıdaki yazı "consociationalism"ın anlamını ve kuramsal temellerini vermekte ardından çeşitli ülkelerdeki "consociational" uygulamalara değinmektedir.

I. INTRODUCTION

TRACING CONSOCIATIONALISM ALONG THE BRANCHES OF TAXONOMY

After the mid-1950s a new mainstream became discernible in political science studies. Researchers embarked on so-called macropolitical theory, and attempted to devise some models or explanations germane at the level of the political system generally. The aim was to mediate holistic categories for comparative analysis. Some criteria were tried to be agreed on to compare "political systems". This milieu appeared to be the soil where consociationalism fruit harvested. From the stem of the comparative studies of political systems some shoots sprouted, and these shoots, in turn, bud some fruits. Consociationalism was one of such fruits. Below is a narrative of consociationalism starting from the sap which was amassed by the roots and went all the way through the stem and the branches, and ending up with the utilization of the fruit.

I.1- A General View to the Comparative Political Systems

Fred W. Riggs, in an article originally written in 1967, renders a retrospective commencing with the second half of the 50s.[1] For the approaches of

comparative studies of political systems contemplated until that time -Almond's being in focus-, he tailors a macro model. He tries to classify the approaches according to the criteria they resorted to differentiate political systems. To this aim, Riggs employs a two-by-two matrix. On one axis he puts "society" and on the other "organization":

O R G A N I Z A T I O N	SOCIETY	
	+	-
	+ A	B
	- C	D

In the matrix, on the horizontal axis a plus indicates handling of society as a whole, and a minus means taking up of only subsystems within a society; whereas on the vertical axis, a plus denotes existence of organization, and a minus signifies absence of organization. The matrix as such, allows eight different departmentalizations:

A	organized whole political systems -Almond model
B	organized partial political systems
C	nonorganized whole political systems
D	nonorganized partial political systems
A&C	whole political systems (or polities)
A&B	organized political systems
B&D	partial political systems
C&D	nonorganized political systems

It is through Almond's model that we are conveyed towards our object consociationalism. This model, which is sometimes also known as "input-output model", claims applicability to all political systems that include a complex or formal organizational structure, and attempts to explain them by some functional categories such as political communication, socialization, articulation, aggregation, rule-making, and rule-application. This is not the venue for analyzing the model in detail. What is important for us here is the criteria he chooses for delimiting his unit of analysis. For any entity to be regarded as a whole political system -or a *polity*- he requires that there exists a formal or a complex

organization (for the term “organization”, which might seem ambiguous, Riggs refers to Theodore Caplow who states that “an organization is a social system that has an unequivocal collective identity, an exact roster of members, a program of activity, and procedures for replacing members”). The model as such, however, is too broad and applies to all kinds of organized societies including corporations and churches. To limit its application, Almond adds a second criterion as “legitimate use of violence” which imparts to the model a governmental element.

1.2-Almond’s Typology of Western Democratic Systems

Within the general framework of the above mentioned model for comparative analysis, Almond goes one step further to classify the organized whole political systems. In an article he published in 1956, we come across a typology of political systems.[2] This typology enshrines three families of Western democratic systems: 1)Anglo-American political systems represented by Britain and the United States, 2)Continental European Political Systems typified by France, Germany or Italy, and 3)A category that bears some characteristics of both the Anglo-American and the Continental European systems and includes the Scandinavian and Low Countries (Almond refrains from designating a title for this category)[3]

In distinguishing these three categories Almond does not depend on the criterion of “geographical location” as might be inferred at first sight. Instead he leans on the relationship between “political culture and social structure” and “political stability”. We can make up a diagram to represent this relationship:

	Political Culture/Social (Role) Structure →	Political Stability
Continental European Political Systems	Fragmentation of political culture with separate political sub-cultures/separate sub-systems of roles of separate sub-cultures	Tendency to Instability
Scandinavian and Low Countries	political culture is “more homogeneous and fusional of secular and traditional elements” than that in the Continental one/ parties are more aggregative than those in the Continental one	More stable than Continental systems, less stable than Anglo-American systems
Anglo-American Political Systems	Homogeneous, secular political culture/ highly differentiated role structure	Highly stable and effective

The relationship between political culture/social structure and political stability is brought about by the concept “overlapping memberships” previously invented by group theorists Arthur F. Bentley and David B. Truman. This concept is established on the claim that simultaneous membership in different groups having different aims and viewpoints causes pressures that operate on both mass and elite level: occupants of key

positions in social groups are also affiliated to other groups via overlapping memberships.

1.3- Lijphart’s Revision of Almond’s Typology and the Birth of Consociationalism

Though appreciating the general reasoning of Almond typology, Lijphart tries to improve the model. He is discontented with the category Almond allocates for the Scandinavian and Low countries. He thinks that, while still maintaining the two criteria in constructing the model, it would be wiser, however, to have only two categories: 1) the Anglo-American, old Commonwealth and Scandinavian states, and 2) the other European democracies, including France, Italy, Weimar Germany, the Low Countries, Austria and Switzerland.

In doing so, he is of the idea that first, aggregative power of political parties as the indicator of the social (role) structure should be replaced by the degree of subsystem autonomy; whereas subsystems like parties interest groups or media of communication in Scandinavian countries are highly autonomous similar to those in Anglo-American countries, they seem to be interpenetrated in the Low Countries, Switzerland, and in Austria. The same is true for the second criterion “political culture” of Almond: whereas the Scandinavian countries do bear more homogenous and fusional elements than the Continental European systems and deserve to be placed with the Anglo-American systems, Lijphart places Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Austria next to the Continental European States.

Some cases, nevertheless, diverge from this revised model: for example, one may infer that countries like Switzerland or Austria with their deeply divided and mutually reinforcing cleavages would prove to be instable, which is not the actual case. These deviant cases Lijphart calls as “consociational democracies”. To analyze this deviant group, he produces a third criterion as “the behavior of the political elites”. In his opinion “the leaders of subcultures” may indulge in rivalry and exacerbate political instability. On the other hand however, they may also strive to assuage the detrimental effects of the fragmented structure of society. This approach to the typology of regimes assumes that, different from Almond again, the Anglo-American kind of democracy is not the one viable one; European democracies are as stable as their Anglo-American counterpart. Lijphart’s typology of regimes is as follows[4]:

		STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY	
		Homogenous	Plural
B E E L H I A T V T I E O R	Coalescent	Depoliticized democracy	Consociational democracy
	Adversarial	Centripetal democracy	Centrifugal democracy

This being the point of departure of consociationalism, let us now examine its main arguments.

II. THE MAIN ARGUMENTS OF CONSOCIATIONALISM

Hans Daalder in an article from 1974 enumerates the main arguments of consociationalism in a succession of reasoning[5]:

1)As we have mentioned above, as an independent variable, elite actions to alleviate the tensions within deeply divided societies as well as their deliberate actions to increase social and cultural concert is a source of stability;

2)Among the elites, there should not be competition either. To provide this they should form a kind of so-called "elite cartel";

3)To complete this appeasing picture, simple majority rule should be relinquished and should be replaced by proportional representation principle. In this way, we can add this remark of Daalder that this would prevent what Alexis de Tocqueville called the "tyranny of majority" by forestalling any group from establishing a mandate;

4)To some extent, government should be deprived of its absolute and time-honored dominion in such a way to allow subcultures to enjoy a certain autonomy;

5)Consociationalism as such both requires a separatist approach as well as a delicate arrangement to mitigate this;

6)Not to rekindle any political or ideological clash, consociationalism should be maintained by a "purposeful depoliticization" of governing which try to approach to problems from technocratic angle;

7)Corollary to the above facts, elections remain as just a ritual, because strongly defined social cleavages already display the result prior to the election;

8)This feature of elections puts the electorate into a passive position too, and even engenders a low participation in elections;

9)The existence of ideologically separated organizations provides a suitable environment for elites in which they can operate with freedom, let alone be a source of clash. This case, Lijphart describes "good social fences may make good political neighbors".[3]

In another article[6] Lijphart himself concisely lists his own four principles of consociationalism: grand coalition (political leaders of all the political segments jointly govern the country), mutual veto (in this way, each segment is given power in decisions), proportionality (as a standard of political representation, civil service appointments, and the allocation of public funds) and segmental autonomy (decision-making authority is delegated to the separate segments as much as possible). Taking consociationalism as such, he maintains that there are some parallelisms between federalism and consociationalism, and goes further by saying that under certain conditions (like the existence of democracy, pluralism, all the four basic principles of consociationalism, decentralization, asymmetry, and as many units as the segments of the society) a federation can be regarded as a consociation, and under other conditions (geographically concentrated segments of the plural society, component units of federation following the segmental boundaries -an overlapping between actual political and segmental boundaries-, and application of other formal procedural functioning of federalism) a consociationalism can be seen as a federation.

III. DIFFERENT EXPLANATIONS FOR THE EMERGENCE OF CONSOCIATIONAL SYSTEMS

As the fledgling literature of consociationalism throve there appeared different explanations on how consociational systems developed. Here again we resort to Daalder.[4] It is possible to differentiate five different explanations on the emergence of consociationalism:

1)Consociationalism as the privilege of small states: All stressing the importance of external threats that enforce elites to come together, this rubric comprises four different explanations. (A)It is assumed that as neutralism is imposed on these states by big powers, consociational structure is also dictated to them at the same time to keep their stability during their neutral position; (B)Considering the possibility that an internal conflict can easily be seen as an excuse to intervene, elites decide to

collaborate; (C)Coalition governments proportional representation, or low level bureaucratic development are such luxuries that only small states that do not have a large responsibility in the international arena can hold them; (D)As these states are opened up to the international arena their leaders realize that decisions cannot be taken in the name of the whole country, and these leaders themselves abandon some part of their power to the related components of the populace.

2) Consociationalism as a “self - denying hypothesis”: As elites (especially their leaders) realize that inter-elite frictions produce harmful effects for the whole society, they decide to cooperate. Here the relation between elites and their followers turns out to be important. Because, some rival secondary leadership groups that are sometimes called *Lumpenelites* try to entice the retinue of these elites. To eliminate the rivals and to be effective, elites make use of some specific circumstances and conditions like external threats, a relatively low load on decision making processes, the existence of a clear balance of power among the subgroups in the country, political and economic stakes of all sections (Christopher Brewin groups this last category into two as the provision of security and of jobs/grants by elites) particularly of leading groups, a low degree of mobilization and/or a high degree of encapsulation of the masses, and finally a perception of an imminent danger to the system as a whole.

3) Consociationalism and the specific nature of cleavages: A)Mechanistic version: i)One argument tries to figure out and to make generalizations on the comparative sizes of segments of society, ii)Another argument attempts to reveal that crosscutting cleavages are the primary reason for reconciliation. B)Qualitative Version: This view contends that among cleavages that center around the concepts like religion, language, race etc., some are more prone to give way to conflicts and others to accommodation.

4) Consociationalism and the Degree of Politicization of Social Divisions: It denies the assumption that cleavages are directly turned into political conflicts and focuses on the importance of the politicization.

5) Consociationalism and Elite Behavior: Contrary to the assumption that elite accommodations give rise to consociationalism, it claims that it is consociationalism itself that provides the suitable environment for elite accommodations.

IV. CONSOCIATIONALISM APPLIED TO SPECIFIC CASES

IV.1- Positive Examples

Below are some countries that, by and large, display the characteristics of consociational practices:

IV.1.1- The Netherlands

The Netherlands proves to be a kind of laboratory in which consociationalism was contemplated. One of the earliest books of Lijphart bears the title *Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands* (1968). This is one of the first texts in the literature that draws attention to a deviance in the instance of the Netherlands from the rule that politics is heavily, if not totally, affected by social phenomena, and that, in particular, there is a strong relation between social fragmentation and political instability.[7] Yet, the Dutch case is subjected to some other interpretations as well. In Lijphart's view, when differences of class and religion threatened the stability of the country, elites attempted to cooperate by 1910, and in 1917 they reached a reconciliation centering around some compromises like stipulations for religious schools, general suffrage, and proportional representation. Daalder, however, argues that there had already appeared some accommodationist attempts during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; there was no central executive, and the confederal structure allowed settlements.[5] During the nineteenth century, as a reaction to both the cleavage between Calvinist and Catholics, and the attempts to form a working-class movement, there appeared a social organization of collectives and a complementary public recognition of different fragments.

Whatever is the past of consociationalism the Netherlands has been the country where Johannes Althusius used the term *consociatio* for the first time[3], and also the Dutch metaphor *verzuiling* (literally meaning pillarization, or the accommodation of various *Zuilen* -pillars-, and having a similar meaning to that of “vertical pluralism”, “segmented pluralism”, “social fragmentation”, or “ideological compartmentalization” all used almost interchangeably, was coined.

After 1960s, however, the *Verzuiling* began to lose its distinction, and started to break down. Since then, the traditional segments (one catholic, two Protestant, and two secular -socialist and liberal-) each having its own political party and affiliated with a different trade union have been vanishing and fusing.

IV.1.2- Belgium

Segmental structure in Belgium is typified by the fact that linguistic cleavages do not overlap with religious ones. With constitutional reform in 1970, every government has had to include an equal number of Flemish Francophone members.

Consociationalism in Belgium is analyzed in three major works: Lucien Huyse's book *Passiviteit, Passiviteit en Verzuiling in Belgische Politiek: een sociologische studie*[5], and Val Lorvin's articles "Segmented Pluralism: Ideological Cleavages and Political Cohesion in the Smaller European Democracies" in *Comparative Politics*, 1971-3, and "Belgium Conflict and Compromise" in Kenneth McRae (ed.) *Consociational Democracy: Political Accommodation in Segmented Societies*, 1974.

Lucien Huyse, in the Belgian case where there is a rich combination of divisions of class, religion and language, asserts that the fragmented structure of society is not a static one, and there are changes depending on the elite behavior and on whether there is solution or non-solution to particular conflicts.[5]

Lorwin, on the other hand, having Belgium with some other West European countries in focus, asserts that there are a group of societies that are typified by religious and ethnic cleavages, hardly express economic and functional cleavages.[7]

IV.1.3- Switzerland

Jürg Steiner is the main figure in the application of consociationalism to the Swiss case. His *Gewaltlose Politik und kulturelle Vielfalt: Hypothesen entwickelt am Beispiel der Schweiz* (1970)[5] and *Switzerland Amicable Agreement versus Majority Rule: Conflict Resolution in Switzerland* (1974)[7]. Using mainly survey method on political participation, he underlines the success of the country in regulating deep religious and linguistic differences, and reaches the conclusion that a low degree of participation indicates a belief in the legitimacy of the existing political system. He brings the historical importance of merchant aristocracy as well of some old mechanisms for reconciliation of different religions and regions to light. Consociational practices were at their highest when Socialist were admitted to the grand coalition of the Federal Council in 1943.

IV.1.4- Austria

Austria is excepted from the others, namely the Scandinavian and Benelux countries and Switzerland that

are denominated as "the sober parliamentary democracies" by Daalder and placed at the one end of a continuum of consociationalism to imply that it is one of the least consociational[5]; to justify Almond, cleavages did end up with a civil war in the case of Austrian *Lager* in 1934. After 1945, however a more stable state was established. The famous state treaty in 1955, brought a so-called "functional autonomy" to the Slovene and Croat minorities living in the Länder of Carinthia, Burgenland and Styria. These minorities, since then have been treated on equal terms in right to elementary instruction in the Slovene or Croat language, to a proportional number of their own secondary schools, the acceptance of the Slovene and Croat languages as an official language besides German, and topological terminology and inscriptions in all three languages.[7]

Gerhard Lehbruch's *Proporzdemokratie: Politisches System und Politische Kultur in der Schweiz und in Österreich* (1967) contains comparative general references to the Austrian example as well as a stress on corporate representative traditions and on the accommodation attempts in the Hapsburg Empire, whereas G. Bingham Powell, Jr. In his *Social Fragmentation and Political Hostility: An Austrian Case Study*(1970) takes up a single Austrian city as his subject. Kurt Steiner in his *Politics in Austria* (1972) diagnoses a transformation in the Austrian Republic from the "centrifugal democracy" of the interwar period to, first "the consociational democracy" experienced in the Great coalition after World War II, and secondly what he calls "depoliticized democracy" thereafter.[5]

Coupled with corporatism, consociational practice in Austria culminated between 1945 and 1966 during the *Grosse Koalition*. In the *Nationalrat* two broad major parties had roughly 90 per cent of the seats. Though the *Koalition* ceased to exist after 1966 and was replaced by first, single-party minority governments, then by single-party minority governments, and finally by two party coalitions, consociationalism might still be regarded living due to the existence of the phenomena *Proporz* and *Socialpartnerschaft*. The former is a practice that provides fragments reflected in the results of election to have institutional implications within bureaucracy, ministries, public corporations, police and universities. *Socialpartnerschaft* on the other hand refers to "paritätische" participation and voluntary agreement.[7]

IV.1.5- The European Union

Some researchers interpret the European Union as a grouping of separate blocs (meaning nation states) who focus on their internal affairs rather than the relations among themselves, where relations among them are

carried out by elites, and decisions by them results of agreements and coalitions. Dissenting elites have the right of veto in this framework and small states have representation as well as their interests are safeguarded.[8] The Union as such can be regarded as a translation of consociationalism to international level.

In Paul Taylor's view, who first applied consociational theory to the European Union case, consociationalism as an approach to integration phenomenon teleologically differs from functionalism and neofunctionalism both suggesting a progressive and linear view of integration. For him, when looked through consociational glasses, integration targets a symbiotic arrangement. Contrary to Archer and Butler who maintain that consociationalism is applicable to the Community of the period during the late 1960s and 1970s[8], Paul Taylor is of the view that this approach still has explanatory power in the 90s' Union having regard to the fact that though a majority decision making is accepted at the Union level, the Union can still be regarded as consociational since *inter alia* the majority voting in the Union differs from the Anglo-American version applied within a single state.[9]

IV.2- Negative Examples

Dunleavy and O'Leary state that in some exceptional cases, despite the existence of social cleavages, the empirical conditions for the working of consociationalism cannot be met, and give the examples of Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine, Cyprus, and the Lebanon.[10]

Indeed, Ireland's record for consociationalist practices is graded by Lijphart with zero[6], and elite influence on government by Lane and Ersson with again zero[7]. Lijphart relates this fact to the absence of support for such an arrangement by both the leadership and the rank and file of the Protestant subculture. He diagnoses, in particular three factors that are conducive to consociationalism but lacking in Ireland: i)The leaders of subcultures are willing to cooperate with the others as long as they are away from the power, ii)Acceptability of grand-coalition form of government as a normative model, iii)Some degree of national solidarity. Yet, he admits that there are three other factors that are contributory to consociationalism exist in Ireland. Namely: i)A small population, ii)Distinct lines of cleavage, iii)External threats to the country.[11] O'Leary, on the other hand, quoting from the critics of Lijphart, contends that first enough motivation, secondly an elite predominance (or a kind of deference of the public), and finally a promotion of consecution not by a

multiple balance of power but by the stability of subcultures are of primary importance. He also adds to these that elites must be sure about both that they can carry their followers with them, and that they are confident of their social bases and their rivals intentions. Under the light of this revised comprehension of consociationalism of his own, O'Leary concludes that the reasons for the failure of the attempts to promote consociation in Ireland are three in number: i)the absence of the required elite motivations, ii)the absence of sufficient elite predominance, and iii)the absence of intra-segmental stability.[12]

Some other attempts have also been made to apply consociational approach to Israel/Palestine, Cyprus[6], and the Lebanon cases which do not however constitute perfect examples as being barren of some empirical conditions for the working of consociationalism.[8] Canada, India, Israel and Nigeria are called as semiconsociational democracies by Lijphart.[12]

V. CONCLUSION

Consociationalism had been devised to remedy the conflicts coming out of the fragmented structures of particular nations, as well as to keep those nations united. Indeed, it was relatively successful in almost all the instances. Currently, after all, -leaving its application to the European Union example out- it can be regarded as a bit dated mechanism. Three facts have been especially influential in this decay: 1)Cleavages based especially on religious grounds have been diminishing around Europe (excepting the Balkans case that poses a complex and difficult-to-diagnose situation); consociationalism can be said to have accomplished its historical mission in Belgium, Austria and the Netherlands where new patterns of behavior have evolved, and an environment of religious peace was already established; 2)With the thriving of mass media, the walls that isolated subcultures have been crossed; and 3)As the old cleavages embedded on such bases like religious or ethnic distinctions were relieved by consociationalism, in the attendant pacific climate some other problems like unfair distribution national income or problems evolving around social security schemes came into the fore rendering consociationalism itself obsolete; vertical cleavages can be said to have weakened whereas horizontal stratifications gained importance.

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