

CONSENSUS POLITICS AND CONSOCIATIONALISM: PRINCIPLES AND INSTITUTIONAL FOUNDATIONS

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Abstract

Many post-colonial states, inherited constitutional and political framework that leaned towards centralization, thereby causing tension among various ethnic groups. The challenge of segmental division has been a significant issue faced by these countries since their independence. Various experiments and models by different governments aimed at addressing these divisions, however, fell short of achieving the desired outcomes. To address this persistent issue, political scientists have consistently advocated for a profound alteration and adaptation of the political system, employing diverse strategies. This paper aims to explain consensus politics and consociationalism, distinguish consociationalism from majoritarian democracy and examine how societal structure influence the adoption of a specific political framework. Simultaneously, it discusses how consociational democracy offers viable solutions to segmental divisions and the resultant political instability. Observing its adoption in many countries around the world, effectively resolving these issues, contributes significantly to a comprehensive understanding of prolonged political crises and the underlying causes of democratic instability in countries such as Pakistan. The paper employs a qualitative, analytical approach based on an extensive review of primary and secondary sources. It draws mainly on the original works of Arend Lijphart to compare the theoretical foundations, key features, and practical implications of majoritarian and consociational models of democracy.

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Background

The inevitability of social change and transformation remains a constant factor across all societies. Major theories of social change, such as evolutionary, conflict, and functionalist, may differ in their explanations of its causes, but they unanimously acknowledge the enduring phenomenon of social change in human societies (Soken-Huberty, 2020). As an intrinsic component of human society, politics also undergoes significant transformations to adapt to emerging needs. The protracted process of socio-political change has seen societies transition from simple tribal structures to highly developed states and complex political systems (Spruyt, 2002).

In more recent times, certain political scientists declared the triumph of liberal democracy as the “End of History,” asserting its superiority over other political ideologies. Liberal democracy, often regarded as the ultimate political system and ideological pinnacle of human evolution, had gained credibility due to the internal stability and comparatively peaceful behavior exhibited by liberal

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states in international relations (Glaser, 2014). This argument held weight as democracy persisted as the dominant political ideology during and after the fall of socialist regimes. However, the contemporary democratic crises particularly in countries with divided societies poses significant challenges to this narrative (Pellick R. D., 2012). In such societies, populist leaders exploit societal segmentation by targeting emotions, distortions, and beliefs to shape public opinion in their favor. Their slogans and narratives, appealing to public emotions, further intensify these divisions, resulting in political crises and presenting a significant threat to democracy (Mounk, 2018).

In this context, consensus politics serves as a unifying tool in heterogeneous societies, preventing and ameliorating the substantial harm inflicted by undemocratic forces. Similarly, democracy's inherent quality of adaptability, without compromising its fundamental principles, allows for addressing problems through institutional changes and transitioning to a more appropriate system. This adaptability enhances the quality of democracy and counters the encroachment of undemocratic forces in heterogeneous societies (Powell, 2000).

Consensus Politics

Consensus is a fundamental principle in consociational democracy, especially crucial in segmented societies, where achieving political stability mainly depends on it. This principle is so pivotal in politics that even majoritarian democracies, primarily characterized by competitive politics, employ it when faced with political challenges. Political consensus refers to a widespread agreement among stakeholders in a political system regarding a specific policy or issue. It involves the process of establishing a shared understanding and reaching a compromise among different political parties and interest groups. In a democratic system, the effective functioning of the government and the implementation of policies benefiting maximum citizens are facilitated through the consensus-building process. Attaining political consensus often involves compromise, negotiation, and active communication among various political parties, with each group making concessions to arrive at an agreement. While at times achieved through a deliberative process involving informed discussion and debate, political consensus considers the interests of all involved parties (Heffernan, 2001).

Consensus as a Political Tool

Functioning as a philosophical and political concept, consensus, characterized by its fundamental element of cooperation, proves to be a valuable political instrument for decision-making bodies. Through its composed and judicious application, important goals and objectives can be attained for the future of a country. An exploration of historical instances wherein consensus served as a harbinger of peace and stability in various countries will further highlight its significance (Sali, 2017).

United States of America

Political consensus has played an indispensable role in the formation of the United States of America, particularly in the framing of its constitution, and continues to be a foundational element of American democracy. Despite the vast diversity and political divisions among the early American colonies, the prospect of unifying them into a single nation initially seemed insurmountable. However, the leadership's acknowledgment of the positive outcomes and prosperity that could arise

from unity prompted the formation of a consolidated government via the Articles of Confederation in 1781 (Watson, 2018) (America's Founding Documents, n.d.).

The initial attempt to establish a unified government faced challenges due to widespread disagreement regarding the necessity for a new constitution and the ineffectiveness of the loose confederation. However, the second attempt, convened in Philadelphia in 1787 with the shared goal of creating a government that served the interests of all, was successful. Despite various issues and disagreements among representatives with diverse backgrounds and political beliefs, they reached a consensus and created a document that was unanimously ratified by all 13 early states (Beeman, n.d.). The constitution-drafting process, though complex and lengthy, effectively addressed contentious matters like the role of the judiciary, representation in the legislature, slavery, and the nature of government through compromise, cooperation, and concessions. Apart from establishing the Union of States, the new Constitution clearly outlined the national government's authority and defined its responsibility to safeguard the rights of states and individuals (Ratifications, n.d.) (Watson, 2018).

One significant challenge during the constitutional process was the disagreement over how states should be represented in the national legislature. Delegates from small and large states were at odds, putting the success of the constitutional process at risk. The Virginia Plan, which was preferred by larger states, proposed representation on the basis of population, whereas the New Jersey Plan supported equal representation for smaller states. To break this deadlock, the Connecticut delegation proposed the "Great Compromise" or the "Compromise of Connecticut," suggesting a two-chambered legislature with equal representation in the Senate for all states and representation in the House of Representatives to be determined by size of population of states (Farrand, 1904). Additionally, the enduring strength and resilience of American democracy is credited to the consensus principle embedded in the US Constitution. E. Gladstone, a prominent British statesman, accurately described the US constitution as the result of a broad compromise involving all parties, serving as evidence of human creativity and determination (Sali, 2017)

United Kingdom

Against the backdrop of a relatively uniform societal structure and a predominant majoritarian state characterized by competitive party behavior, the post-World War II Britain faced serious challenges, including issues like inflation, unemployment, and economic fragility. These challenges were addressed through a consensus-driven approach. As a result, both the Labour and Conservative parties collaborated in governing the state through a consensus-oriented framework from 1945 to 1970, playing a crucial role in promoting socio-economic and political stability (Blackburn, 2017). During this period, despite substantial differences in aims, objectives, values, and principles between the left-leaning Labour Party and the right-leaning Conservatives, all governments, regardless of party, pursued similar policies after World War II (Robins, 1998). Similarly, British politics and policy outcomes reflected a comprehensive collectivist agenda often characterized as social democrat. Governments, whether Labour or Conservative, shared the goal of overseeing the economy, regulating a market perceived as incapable of self-regulation, and actively pursuing national-level stabilization and growth through economic policies. Additionally, the state played a role in providing social incomes, empowering trade unions, making significant public investments,

and exerting control over industry. This social understanding found endorsement from both center-right and center-left parties in Britain. This post-war consensus, was characterized by an unspoken, harmonious agreement between the two parties (Soriano-Jiménez, 2021).

Simultaneously, the two political parties engaged in competition and expressed disagreements based on their positions on the political spectrum during elections. However, when in government, they implemented policies and practices that were influenced by a consensus. In this context, the term "Butskellism" emerged in the postwar era to underscore the resemblances in the policies of Conservative Chancellor Rab Butler and his Labour predecessor Hugh Gaitskell. Both Chancellors employed a similar language with different accents and emphases, reflecting slight distinctions between Labour's emphasis on equality, redistribution, and planning, and the Conservative focus on markets, freedom, and opportunity. Consequently, while the two parties collaborated on overall policies due to consensus, they focused on different areas to preserve their distinct status. However, in the 1970s, Britain experienced economic challenges, including inflation and limited economic growth, which diminished the significance of the consensual framework. Consequently, both the Labour and Conservative parties returned to their ideological positions, adopting conflicting ideologies and pursuing ambitious reform agendas (Hefferman, 2002).

Global Consensus

The United Nations Organization (UNO) is a striking example highlighting the crucial role of consensus in global politics. Its formation brought together diverse countries with varying political systems and ideologies on a unified global platform, highlighting the significance of consensus. As one of the most pivotal outcomes of collaborative initiatives and international decision-making bodies, the UN has played a crucial role in shaping global affairs. Throughout its history, the UN has mostly operated by making decisions through consensus, contributing significantly to establishing and maintaining global peace and security (Sali, 2017). Moreover, the UNO has established responsible structures that have guided its path over the past many decades in the world. Article 51 of the UN Charter articulates the right of individuals or groups within all member states of the UN to be defended. It allows actions to be taken to exercise this right until the Security Council acts to ensure global peace and security (Chesterman, S. 2016).

Consociational Democracy

Democracy, known for its inclination to evolve and adapt, has undergone changes, modifications, and reforms over time. It has simultaneously aligned itself with the societal structure, enabling effective governance while upholding its core principle of "government of the people, by the people, for the people" (Lijphart, 2012). This foundational idea emphasizes that authority should come from the people and remain accountable to them. As an evolving concept, democracy consistently remains open to improvement, aiming to address flaws, shortcomings, and instances of corruption. In contemporary democracies worldwide, various formal government institutions, including judiciaries, legislative bodies, political parties, and interest groups, represent a diverse institutional arrangement (Sultana, 2012).

When it comes to the fundamental question of governance, states have developed and adopted governance models based on majoritarian or consociational paradigms. In the majoritarian model, the government is established and operated according to the preferences of the majority, reflecting majority sentiments when diverse views exist among the population. Conversely, the consensus model sees majority support as a minimum requirement for governance, involving as many individuals as possible rather than relying on a narrow decision-making majority. The consociational model's institutional framework calls for broad participation in governance and widespread agreement on pursued policies. On the contrary, the majoritarian model advocates vesting political authority in a limited majority, while the consensual model necessitates dispersing, distributing, and limiting power through diverse channels. Furthermore, the majoritarian model is characterized by competitiveness, opposition, and exclusivity, while the consensus model is defined by compromise, negotiation, and inclusivity (Guillory, 1997).

Institutional Differences between Consensus and Majoritarian Models

Based on the two models, organizational distinctions can be noticed in various countries that have adjusted their political systems considering their societal structures. Arend Lijphart, the advocate of Consociational democracy theory, has highlighted differences between consociational and majoritarian approaches in the institutional arrangement of different democracies. These variations are categorized into two dimensions, the executive-party and federal-unitary dimensions. Within both dimensions, certain characteristics are compared. In the executive-party dimension, differences are observed regarding political parties, electoral systems, and executive power (Pelikaan R. D., 2012). Likewise, the differences within the federal-unitary dimension encompass various aspects, such as the types of government, the distribution of power, the nature of legislature, and the flexibility of the constitution, of both models. The main characteristics outlined by Arend Lijphart are as follows (Lijphart, 2012).

Major Differences on the executive-party dimension

- i. In majoritarian model executive powers are vested in cabinet with single party whereas in consociational model executive powers are shared in coalition of many parties' cabinet.
- ii. Similarly, in majoritarian system executive has the upper hand vis-a-vis legislature while consensus maintains power equilibrium between the two.
- iii. Two party system in majoritarian democracy versus multiparty in consensus model.
- iv. Disproportional electorate in majoritarian system whereas consensus model keeps proportional representation.

Contrasts on federal-unitary dimension

- i. In comparison to a consociational system with a Federal and decentralized government, the majoritarian model supports a unitary and centralized system.
- ii. Bi-cameral legislature in consensus model versus Unicameral legislature in majoritarian system.

- iii. Consociationalism upholds a rigid constitution versus flexible constitution requiring simple majority for amendment in majoritarian model.
- iv. The presence of Constitutional courts with the power of judicial review to see the constitutionality of a law in consensus system versus exclusive authority of legislature over the constitutionality of a law.

The aforementioned distinctions can be expanded upon by providing examples from two countries, each exemplifying the majoritarian and consensus models. The United Kingdom has been chosen as an illustration of the majoritarian model, while Switzerland has been selected to explain the consensus model (Lijphart, 2012).

United Kingdom as A Prototype of Majoritarian Democracy

The British version of democracy, commonly known as the Westminster model, stands as a primary and widely recognized illustration of the majoritarian model. Given that the activities of the British parliament occur in the Palace of Westminster located in London, it is aptly named the Westminster model. This model's characteristics are also evident in other countries like Australia, Canada, Pakistan, and various other former British colonies in Asia and Africa. The Westminster model is considered a prime example of the majoritarian model (Serban, 2020). The fundamental elements of the Westminster model are discussed below.

Executive Party Dimension

In the UK, executive power is focused within a single-party cabinet established by the political party that secures the highest number of seats in the House of Commons. Because of the two-party system, it is uncommon to have coalition governments in the UK since the winning party usually only gets a small majority, leaving out the large minority party. Hence, the single-party cabinet with concentrated executive powers, representing a slim majority, is a clear illustration of a majoritarian system (Lijphart, 2012).

Although there are a few exceptions to the usual majority government in the UK, like coalition cabinets formed during 1918 to 1945, the Labour Party creating a minority cabinet with other small parties after the 1974 elections, and the Cameron-Clegg coalition in 2010, these coalitions only happened when a single party could not secure a bare majority, causing a hung parliament. In a hung parliament, a single party gets the most votes but does not achieve a straightforward majority. The British parliamentary system typically follows the norm where a single-party cabinet holds executive power (Robert Hazell, 2009).

Supremacy of Cabinet:

The British Cabinet, in theory, is accountable to parliament, with the House of Commons having the authority to remove it through a No-Confidence vote anytime. However, because the cabinet consists of members from the majority party in the House of Commons, it wields influence and authority over the parliament. As long as the cabinet maintains majority support, it can confidently stay in office and conduct its parliamentary duties (Coppedge, 2018).

Nevertheless, the dominance of the Cabinet can be weakened if it lacks majority support or if there is disagreement within the majority party, as seen in the minority governments of the 1970s that were restored in the 1980s during Margaret Thatcher's leadership. This indicates that the authority of the executive in a majoritarian democracy relies more on the discipline of the two-party system than on the parliamentary system itself (Coppedge, 2018).

Political Party System

In Britain, despite the existence of numerous political parties, the political scene is primarily dominated by two major parties, the Labour Party and the Conservative. Smaller parties like the Liberal Democrats, Scottish National Party, Welsh Nationalists, and parties in Northern Ireland participate in elections but have never achieved an overall victory. In the elections following World War II, the two major parties have consistently secured the majority of seats and have taken turns in forming the government. The reduced support for the major parties have resulted in increased votes for the Liberal Democrats, although it has not translated into more seats (Bale, 2021).

Electoral System

The House of Commons consist of more than 650 elected members, chosen through the plurality method, also known as 'first-past-the-post,' in single-member constituency. In this approach, the candidate with the most votes in each constituency emerges as the winner, without the necessity of obtaining a majority but rather a plurality, more votes than any other candidate. As the number of political parties participating in elections increases, winners often secure less than a simple majority due to divided support. Historically, a majority of Members of Parliament (MPs) have won elections with only 35 to 49 percent of local support, which is less than a simple majority. Consequently, the plurality method results in disproportionate outcomes, where MPs have a smaller share of national votes than the losing candidates (Gilson, 2010).

The secured majority under the plurality system is appropriately termed as 'manufactured majorities, artificially created through plurality. This disproportional electoral system consistently benefits dominant parties and puts minority parties at a disadvantage. As a result, in the UK, the plurality system has been primarily supported by the Conservatives and Labour parties, whereas smaller parties such as the Liberals and Liberal Democrats have been pushing for changes in favor of proportional representation (Mitchell, 2006).

Federal-Unitary Dimension

In the federal-unitary dimension, the UK stands out as a prime illustration of a majoritarian democracy. The centralized government, unicameral legislature, flexible constitution, and absence of judicial review in the UK collectively characterize it as a majoritarian democracy. The following explanation of these features demonstrate how they define the UK as a majoritarian state.

Centralized Government

The UK functions as a centralized state with a single central government. While there are local governments, they rely on financial support from the central government and lack constitutional assurances for their powers. Among the major industrialized countries, the UK is considered one of the most strong unitary states. Despite providing autonomy to Northern Ireland and devolving powers to Scotland and Wales following the 1997 referendums, the UK still remains one of the most

centralized states in the Western world. The parliament granted devolution of powers and a certain degree of autonomy through a single majoritarian decision, but it retains the authority to revoke these powers at any time. Therefore, the characteristic of a centralized system places the UK in the category of a majoritarian state (Lijphart, 2012).

Unicameral Legislature

While the UK, in theory, seems to deviate from the majoritarian principle with a two-chambered system, consisting of the House of Commons (lower house) and the House of Lords (upper house), in practice, legislative power is predominantly concentrated in the House of Commons. The House of Lords is seen as a symbolic chamber with the power only to postpone a bill. Members of the House of Commons are elected directly by the public, whereas House of Lords members are chosen by the government, mostly made up of hereditary nobles and life peers. Consequently, the House of Commons possesses nearly exclusive authority over legislation. While the House of Lords can postpone money bills for a month and other bills for one year, the House of Commons still has the authority to abolish the upper house through a simple legislation. Therefore, despite having a bicameral legislature, the powers of the House of Commons in the UK align it perfectly with the majoritarian model (Flinders, 2005).

Flexible Constitution

The UK constitution stands out for being referred to as an ‘unwritten’ constitution, distinct from the written constitutions found in many other countries. It draws from various sources like statutes, conventions, common law, and authoritative works rather than being codified into a single document. This lack of a centralized codified document gives the UK constitution flexibility, allowing changes with a regular parliamentary majority without the need for super-majorities like a two-thirds. The sole exception lies in the authority of the House of Lords, which can postpone an amendment for a maximum of one year (The UK constitution, 2023).

Absence of Judicial Review

The UK’s lack of a codified constitution results in the absence of judicial review. Courts are unable to assess the legality of regular legislation passed by the parliament due to the absence of a higher law (Constitution) against which to measure. As a result, the parliament holds ultimate authority to create or nullify any law, and there is no power with the right to overturn or invalidate legislation enacted by the parliament. While the parliament typically respects the boundaries set by the unwritten constitution, it maintains unrestricted legislative power. Hence, the supremacy of the UK parliament and the absence of judicial review place it within the majoritarian model (Brader, 2021).

Switzerland as an Example of the Consensus Model

In examining the Consensus Model, Switzerland emerges as a prime example, contrasting with the Majoritarian Model’s government-versus-opposition structure. The Majoritarian approach, critiqued for potentially excluding minorities, contradicts the democratic ideal of involving all affected parties in decision-making. Concentrating decision-making power in the hands of a slim majority, thus excluding larger minorities, is seen as a violation of the fundamental democratic rule of representative government (Tjin, 2023).

Critics of the Majoritarian system often raise concerns about minority exclusion. However, its proponents argue that the electoral system allows for the rotation of majority and minority parties in government through elections. This rotation, typical in a two-party system under the Majoritarian model, offers equal opportunities for both parties to govern. This mechanism works well in homogeneous societies where the major parties tend to align closely in policy outlook (Blondel, n.d.). In such contexts, the exclusion of a party from government, even for an extended period, may not violate the democratic principle of “government for the people” due to the similarity of outlook between major parties that generally stay close to the political center (Siaroff, 2002).

However, the Majoritarian principle of the rotation of two parties in government may not be applicable in fragmented societies. In societies divided along ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, and ideological lines, where voters’ loyalties are rigid, parties may not remain close to the political center. Moreover, different groups in divided societies have their own media and political parties, making the mere alteration of major parties in government and the permanent exclusion of minority parties not just a violation of democratic principles but potentially dangerous. Constantly alienating minority parties from power can lead to a loss of allegiance to the state and government (Wolinetz, 2004). For example, in a less homogenous society like Northern Ireland, the prolonged rule of the Unionist party representing the Protestant majority from 1921 to 1972 led the Catholic minority to engage in massive protests, eventually resulting in civil war, which was quelled through British military intervention. The political crisis in Northern Ireland was resolved by adopting a system of broad Catholic-Protestant power-sharing coalitions (Schneckener, 2002).

For illustrating the Consensus Model, Switzerland stands out as a classic example of Consensus democracy. In heterogeneous societies like Switzerland, introducing the Majoritarian model might lead to majority dictatorship and civil strife, challenging its characterization as a true democracy. Mere majority rule may not suffice in such societies, necessitating a system based on consensus, inclusiveness, maximum majorities, and power-sharing coalitions. Therefore, for plural, divided, and heterogeneous societies, the strongly recommended alternative to the Majoritarian model is the Consensus model, emphasizing broad coalitions, proportional representation, and federalism. The Consensus model of democracy has characteristics that sharply contrast with those of the Majoritarian model (Mueller, 2021).

Coalition Cabinet

In the Consensus Model, executive power is collectively vested in a coalition comprising all or the maximum number of parties within the cabinet. A noteworthy illustration of this shared cabinet structure is the Swiss seven-member Executive Council, officially designated as the Federal Council. During the Cold War era, the main political parties, Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, and Radical Democrats, were represented in the Federal Council based on a formula of 2, 2, 2. While, the Swiss People’s Party (SPP), holding one-eighth of the legislative seats, was granted one seat in the Council. Following the 2003 elections, wherein the SPP emerged as the largest party, the magic formula experienced a brief interruption. However, the broad coalition and formula were reinstated in 2009, incorporating additional regulations for linguistic representation, ensuring a rough proportionality to the French, Italian, and German-speaking populations. Therefore, in contrast to the Majoritarian principle, which concentrates executive powers in a single-

party cabinet, the Swiss Consensus Model distributes executive power among the major parties in the Federal Council (Fenazzi, 2019).

An Independent Legislature

In contrast to the Majoritarian model observed in the UK, where the cabinet holds supremacy and wields more power than the parliament, the Swiss constitution establishes a delicate balance of power between the two. The Federal Council members are chosen by the United Federal Assembly, which is a two-chamber legislature consisting of the House of National Council (Lower House) and the Council of States (Upper House). They serve a term of four years. Additionally, the Federal Assembly selects the Federal president from among the seven-member Executive Council for a one-year term. Notably, the legislature lacks the authority to present a Vote of No-Confidence against the elected members of the Federal Council during their four-year tenure. Furthermore, the Swiss constitution enforces a separation of powers between the Executive and the legislature. The defeat of a government bill in the United Federal Assembly does not imply a loss of confidence or the resignation of the Federal Council as a collective body. Consequently, Switzerland exemplifies a system under the Consensus Model that is neither Presidential nor parliamentary, featuring a powerful yet non-supreme Cabinet, and ensuring the independence of the Executive and legislature (Belser, 2018).

Party System

In the realm of political parties, Switzerland embraces a multiparty system characterized by a diverse array of political entities. Following Consociationalism, executive power is shared among right-wing, left-wing, and centrist parties in the federal council. Traditionally, the Federal Council comprised representatives from four parties, as none of them secured a clear majority in the Federal Assembly. At present, the Federal Council is formed by the SPP, the Green Party, the Radical Liberal Party, and the Social Democratic Party. Following the 2019 elections, the Green Party surpassed the Centre Party, which dropped to fifth position, highlighting the former's expansion of its voter base by prioritizing environmental concerns. While various local parties secure seats in the Federal Assembly, the top four find representation in the Executive Council. Hence, the party system in Switzerland may aptly be described as a multi-party system (Klaunzer, 2023).

System of Representation

In terms of the system of representation, Switzerland stands as a nation marked by its diverse minorities, divided along religious and linguistic lines. Addressing the representation of these minorities through the multiparty system in parliament, the majority-based electoral system, favoring large parties and disadvantaging smaller ones, is deemed wholly unsuitable for Swiss society. Consequently, proportional representation has been adopted to allocate parliamentary seats based on the votes each party receive in elections. Unlike the two-party system, proportional representation affords all parties the opportunity to represent their respective communities' interests. Within the consensus model of Switzerland, proportional representation has proven successful in averting the emergence of societal divisions along party system cleavages (The Federal Assembly (Parliament), 2023).

Federalism and Decentralization

In the realm of federalism and decentralization, Switzerland emerges as a federal state and one of the most decentralized globally. Power and responsibilities are intricately divided between the central government and the 26 Cantons (subnational states). The federal government in Switzerland encompasses the legislature, executive, and judiciary, overseeing national affairs such as foreign policy, currency, national infrastructure, and defense (Mueller P. D., 2019).

At the subnational level, each of the 26 Cantons maintains its distinct government, legislature, and constitution. These Cantons wield the authority to govern and legislate on subjects not explicitly covered in the federal list, including healthcare, education, local infrastructure, and transportation. The substantial devolution of powers to Cantons affords them considerable autonomy in policy implementation aligned with local preferences. Additionally, Cantonal governments enjoy fiscal independence, enabling them to impose taxes and manage their local budgets (Main executive and legislative bodies , 2022).

Within the decentralized Swiss system, the federal government serves as a unifying force, coordinating specific areas of governance to promote uniformity, consistency, and national cohesion. Furthermore, the decentralized nature of the Swiss system facilitates citizen participation in decision-making at all levels (Mueller P. D., 2019).

Perfect Bi-cameralism

The Swiss Ständerat (Council of States or upper chamber) stands as an exemplary model. The inception of this model traces back to the significant compromise of 1848, striking a balance between the Conservative minority, advocating for the preservation of a loose confederation and the sovereign status of Cantons, and the liberal majority, championing a unitary state with a strong national government. The resultant Constitution transformed the Confederacy into a federal state, preserving Canton autonomy and centralizing only matters of utmost importance (Belser, 2018).

The constitutional framing faced the challenge of representing Cantons, with those of larger populations favoring representation based on population and those with smaller populations insisting on equal representation. The solution laid in the introduction of bicameralism, where the upper chamber featured equal representation of constituent units, and the Sonderbund (lower chamber or National Council) adopted representation based on population size. This formula ensured absolute equality for both chambers in all legislative matters. Therefore, the core purpose of Switzerland's bicameral system is to represent linguistic and geographic regions at the federal level, ensuring meaningful participation of constituent units at the Centre (Belser, 2018).

Rigid Constitution

With a rigid constitution, Switzerland adheres to a complex process for its amendment, which can be brought through either a referendum or a constitutional initiative. In the referendum mechanism, unanimous approval from both federal chambers is essential to wholly or partially revise the constitution. Subsequently, the proposed changes undergo evaluation through Canton and public voting. If the majority of citizens and cantons express their approval, the constitution undergoes the proposed amendment. Additionally, if a proposal for constitutional amendment gains approval from only one chamber, it is subjected to public vote. If the majority endorses it, the federal assembly is dissolved, and the newly elected assembly incorporates the proposed amendment into the

constitution Likewise, an alternative system for amending the Swiss constitution involves the Constitutional initiative. Through this process, an amendment can be initiated by a petition having the support of a minimum of fifty thousand Swiss citizens (Singh, 2018).

Absence of Judicial Review

In the event of a bill or law being amended through a referendum or popular initiative, no court within the country possesses the authority to declare it unconstitutional, and it remains immune from challenges in any court of law. In 1939, a popular initiative sought to bestow the courts with the power of Judicial Review, yet it encountered a resolute rejection. Subsequently, as part of comprehensive judicial reforms in 2000, the parliament earnestly contemplated establishing constitutional courts, but this endeavor also met with failure. Thus, it can be asserted that the deficiency in the Swiss consensus model lies in the absence of Judicial Review (Andreas Lienhard, 2017).

Conclusion

The preceding discussion emphasizes that many developed nations have faced challenges similar to those encountered by post-colonial Asian countries such as Pakistan, particularly in establishing a stable political system and managing ethnic diversity. In their pursuit of effective governance and addressing ethnic divisions, the developed nations have adjusted their institutions to align with their social structures, resulting in political stability and the integration of divided societies into unified nations, as exemplified by the United States. This underscores the importance of considering the social fabric when designing institutions. The endeavor to establish a centralized state structure in a fragmented society is likely to encounter resistance from minority groups, potentially disrupting smooth functioning. Similarly, neglecting societal realities in the state structure not only contradicts democratic principles but can also pose dangers, as seen in the case of Northern Ireland and the break-up of Pakistan in 1971. The divergent examples of the United Kingdom and Switzerland, representing two democratic models, offer a valuable basis for examining prolonged political crisis in countries with heterogeneous societies. This paper provides a framework for examining the politics of countries with diverse societies in light of the discussed themes, aiming to assess how the concentration of political power in fragmented societies contributed to the erosion of democracy and political instability in such states.

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