

## The Advantages of Parliament beyond the *Perils of Presidentialism*: Parliament's Prospects for Indirect Deliberative Democracy

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### Abstract

This article argues that the parliamentary model's institutional features are better-suited than those of the presidential model for achieving what is here termed indirect deliberative democracy. This article first considers the claim by Juan Linz that parliamentary systems are better than presidential systems in terms of democratic stability, and upon closer examination, concludes that regime type is not necessarily responsible for differing levels of democratic stability. The subsequent analysis then recasts this debate in the context of Jürgen Habermas' conception of communicative rationality and John Rawls' notion of an overlapping consensus, and this context serves as a basis for demonstrating that two of the reasons that Linz perceives as responsible for greater stability in parliamentary models may offer greater deliberative potential: electoral flexibility and having an embedded executive. As this article shows, a parliament's institutional advantages for achieving indirect deliberative democracy can only theoretically come to fruition in settings where two preconditions are in place. First, an electoral system based on proportional representation is necessary because decision-making must

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include diverse perspectives while seeking consensus. Second, examining Robert Putnam's research on the historical relationship between political culture and democratic institutions reveals that a political culture marked by a high level of participation is also essential for indirect deliberative democracy. In the end, showing that a parliament can more closely approximate a deliberative environment in comparison with a presidential system can in itself serve as a step toward actualizing indirect deliberative democracy.

Keywords : Deliberative Democracy, Representative Democracy, Political Culture, Proportional Representation, Jürgen Habermas, John Rawls, Robert Putnam

## 1. Introduction

In "The Perils of Presidentialism," Juan Linz argues that parliamentary systems are more effective than presidential systems when it comes to democratic regime survival. Linz contends that the parliamentary system has historically performed better in terms of democratic stability due to its institutional design, which is especially capable of sustaining democracy in countries with multiple parties and deep political and social cleavages.<sup>1</sup> While the kind of flexibility found in the parliamentary model appears especially important for emerging democracies, the parliamentary model's institutional features may not prove particularly significant for mature democracies in which democratic stability is largely secured. As the following analysis demonstrates, however, the parliamentary model may also benefit mature democracies

more than the presidential model by more closely approximating the environment necessary for what is here termed indirect deliberative democracy—as opposed to purely representative democracy.

This article first considers whether or not institutional differences between parliamentary and presidential systems can influence a country's level of democratic stability. A closer examination of the evidence that Linz presents reveals that regime type is not necessarily responsible for democratic stability. Recasting this institutions and stability analysis in the context of Jürgen Habermas' conceptualization of communicative rationality and John Rawls' conception of an overlapping consensus then serves as a basis for demonstrating that two of the reasons that Linz perceives as responsible for greater stability in parliamentary models may offer greater deliberative potential: parliament's electoral flexibility and having an embedded executive. However, a parliament's institutional advantages for achieving indirect deliberative democracy can only come to fruition theoretically in settings where two preconditions are in place. First, decision-making must include diverse perspectives while seeking consensus, which therefore requires an electoral system based on proportional representation. Second, examining Robert Putnam's research on the historical relationship between political culture and democratic institutions reveals that a political culture marked by a high level of participation is also essential for indirect deliberative democracy. In the end, showing that parliamentary models can more closely approximate a deliberative environment in comparison with presidential models can in itself serve as a step toward actualizing Habermas' and Rawls' ideals.

## 2. Presidential versus Parliamentary Models

### 2.1 Parliamentary Systems and Democratic Stability

The parliamentary system has historically performed better than the presidential system in terms of democratic stability, according to Linz, due to an institutional design that can sustain democratic governance in countries with multiple parties and deep political and social cleavages.<sup>2</sup> Linz offers several reasons to explain why parliamentary systems generate greater democratic stability. He posits that presidential models are comparatively less flexible because the presidency represents a single office, which from an electoral perspective marginalizes all losing parties. Unlike a prime minister, a president's power cannot stem from a coalition. Rather, a president can win a plurality of votes and yet continue his or her term in office without a genuine mandate. The president's fixed term in office is also a prominent source of rigidity, for even in instances when winning only a slim plurality, as with Chile's Salvador Allende in 1970, the president can receive a mandate to rule for a fixed period of time that is extremely difficult to legally challenge.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, securing democratic stability often requires coalitions and pacts, but presidential models tend to rigidly formalize these arrangements, which can stress fragile democracies.<sup>4</sup> A parliament, by contrast, can resolve such gridlock by simply changing prime ministers, which would not precipitate a particular regime's collapse.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout this fixed term, the president is invested with both the "ceremonial" functions of a head of state" and a chief executive's powers. According to Linz, this creates a set of popular expectations that are very different than those of a prime minister since the president may believe

him or herself less constrained by the legislature. Having the prime minister sit in parliament with other members of parliament divests this position of the exclusive power that a president holds. The presidential model is also problematic because the legislative assembly and the president can claim legitimacy on account of being directly elected, meaning that significant conflict is possible if disciplined parties in the legislature offer a clear ideological alternative to the president's agenda. These competing claims of legitimacy can ultimately lead to military intervention in extreme cases.<sup>6</sup>

## **2.2 Other Factors that Influence Democratic Stability**

Scott Mainwaring and Matthew Shugart challenge the notion that parliamentary systems achieve greater democratic stability. They contend that the presidential system is not as rigid and based on a winner-take-all model as Linz claims. Presidentialism may actually represent less of a winner-take-all system since voters can have their candidate lose the presidency, yet have their preferred party win control of the legislature.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, parliamentary systems are not necessarily insulated from the inflexible aspects associated with presidential systems. In a majoritarian parliamentary system with disciplined parties, for instance, one party can effectively control the government. A presidential system, on the other hand, gives a party that loses its bid for the presidency a chance to serve as a check on the executive by gaining control of the legislative assembly. Furthermore, many aspects that are found in presidential systems need not be implemented as they often have been so far in existing cases. Reducing the term length or including provisions that allow the president or the head of the assembly to call early elections could easily mitigate the

rigidity that stems from fixed terms.<sup>8</sup>

Mainwaring and Shugart identify a number of differences that tend to correlate with either parliamentary or presidential systems, such as the size of countries and per capita GNP, which lead them to hypothesize that “the superior record of parliamentarism may be more a product of the background condition than the regime type.”<sup>9</sup> In particular, former British colonies host most of the parliamentary systems in lower income countries, while Latin America and Africa usually feature presidential systems. Isolating fifty former colonies can control for this British colonial factor, which reveals a thirty-eight-percent success rate for the thirty-four states that adopted a parliamentary system after gaining independence compared with zero percent for the five states that adopted a presidential system.<sup>10</sup> While this indicates that other factors beyond colonial heritage may influence the parliamentary survival rate, the sampling discrepancy is too significant to take this thirty-eight-percent difference in survival rate for granted. Contrasting a sample of five with a sample of thirty-four (which itself does not yield overwhelming evidence favoring parliamentary systems since the survival rate is still well below half) is problematic since these five states cannot provide enough variation to demonstrate that the presidential system is the reason for failure.

The very fact that thirty-four out of fifty former British colonies chose a parliamentary model itself suggests that British colonial influence has been significant given that South American states and African states appear less inclined to go with a parliamentary system. If so, then the stability found in parliamentary models may stem from exposure to Britain’s own political stability and the values that make stable democratic government possible, meaning that the model of government chosen may

not have significantly influenced democratic stability. For instance, Ramachandra Guha argues that cricket helped develop non-violent strategies for dealing with racial and caste tensions in India, with various groups competing on the cricket field and accepting the umpire's decisions — people look to defeat each other within a system of rules.<sup>11</sup> Cricket may thus have helped instill values and norms that emphasize fair-play and working within a system of pre-established rules, which may have helped foster a political culture that accepts winning and losing through institutions rather than overthrowing them in times of gridlock or dissatisfaction.<sup>12</sup> That is, accepting a referee's decisions based on a system of fixed rules could help foster a collective mindset that accepts unfavorable outcomes (such as losing a game of cricket or an election) without resorting to violence when those outcomes are reached fairly. Seen in this way, the British colonial experience may have helped instill the spirit of abiding by fixed rules, with fairness being officially defined rather than subject to chieftain-style judgments.<sup>13</sup>

By extension, the British also exerted influence by often training civil servants, developing institutions, and establishing political practices.<sup>14</sup> This kind of influence could then have helped develop certain cultural and institutional features that foster democratic government, which are otherwise absent in territories that were colonized by countries whose political development was not as advanced. Latin American states, for example, were exposed to Spain's transition from medieval institutions to more modernized government, while many African countries were exposed to France's tumultuous democratization by means of multiple regime changes. The former relationship between Britain and its colonies therefore suggests that the conditions present when implementing

democratic government may significantly impact whether or not democratic governance succeeds irrespective of the model chosen.

Additionally, a country's size and level of affluence appear to strongly correlate with democratic success and stability. Small countries may achieve democratic stability more easily because relatively homogeneous populations typically comprise their social structure. Such social climates reduce the prospect of ethnic, religious, or linguistic conflict.<sup>15</sup> Economic strength also fosters democratic stability, particularly when income is not excessively concentrated.<sup>16</sup> This appears significant in this particular debate, for as Mainwaring and Shugart note, a number of developing states with parliamentary models fall on the higher end of the spectrum with regard to income distribution and on the lower end of the spectrum with regard to population size and diversity. Parliament may thus not lead to greater democratic stability, but instead, factors that make democratic stability possible may help parliament succeed. Or, as Sir Alan Burns put it: "the Westminster model seems to succeed best in cricket-playing countries."<sup>17</sup>

When considering the correlations that Mainwaring and Shugart make between democratic stability, economic strength, and size, the evidence does not appear sufficient to conclude that parliamentary systems yield greater democratic stability. Emerging democratic states in Africa can eventually serve as additional cases to test the effects of presidential systems, so the future may offer better comparisons between parliamentary and presidential systems in terms of democratic stability.<sup>18</sup> Until then, however, it is premature to conclude that a parliamentary system can achieve greater democratic stability.



### 2.3 Institutional Design and Mature Democracies

There appears to be some wavering in the literature examined between only discussing developing states and at times including developed states when trying to identify factors that influence democratic stability. As José Antonio Cheibub and Fernando Limongi note: “Discussions of legislative organization usually make reference to the paradigmatic cases of England and the United States ... a parliamentary and a presidential democracy.”<sup>19</sup> That is, some authors include developed countries in these statistical analyses or draw on iconic Western examples to explain why one institutional feature generates greater democratic stability. A question arises, then, as to whether or not institutional design is supposed to explain stability in both the developed and developing world. As Linz disclaims in his critique of presidential systems, presidential models can demonstrate stability in countries where a majority of the population does not stray far from the middle. Linz thus rightfully excludes the United States for the purposes of determining institutional stability in developing states with great social cleavages. However, while Linz relies heavily on the Spanish example to illustrate parliamentary flexibility, he also refers to Britain to illustrate how having a prime minister sit as a member of parliament and having a symbolic head of state serve as a moderating power can create prime ministerial accountability.<sup>20</sup> Yet, like the United States, Britain certainly does not have the kind of deep cleavages or the tendency to stray far from the middle as is the case with some emerging democracies. This effectually excludes the most stable presidential example, yet includes the most stable parliamentary example.

Perhaps references to the British and American examples usefully serve as illustrative examples, given each country’s prominence, but these

references hinder efforts to examine institutional features in the context of actual possibilities for collapse. When considering the possibility that institutional differences could contribute to or help prevent democratic instability, pointing to prime ministerial accountability in Britain, for example, might take away from the mindset that a government or regime crisis can lead to something like a military coup or civil war in some emerging democracies.<sup>21</sup> After all, advanced democratic states like the United States and Britain would have likely been democratic during the second half of the twentieth century regardless of the system they had in place.<sup>22</sup> Regime type may thus prove decisive for democratic stability in emerging democracies, but democratic stability is not a salient issue in the context of mature democracies. While this debate about regime type is not especially pressing for mature democracies, the following analysis shows that it is significant in mature democracies when considered from the perspective of achieving deliberative democracy.

### **3. The Parliamentary System and Indirect Deliberative Democracy**

#### **3.1 Indirect Deliberative Democracy**

While the parliamentary system may not conclusively yield greater democratic stability than the presidential model, a parliament may theoretically offer greater prospects for indirect deliberative democracy. “Deliberative democrats contend not simply that democratic deliberation can influence and even shape peoples’ political preferences,” Samuel Freeman writes, “but also that people ... share certain common interests; and that is the role of democratic deliberation to discover these common interests and the laws and policies needed to realize or maintain them.”<sup>23</sup>

Habermas and Rawls present two prominent visions of deliberative democracy. While significant differences between the two versions exist, both reject the pursuit of compromises amongst competing interests and instead favor the pursuit of consensus through impartial deliberation that benefits all. Since “the differences in their methodologies,” according to Seyla Benhabib, “are less significant than their shared assumption that the institutions of liberal democracies embody the idealized content of a form of practical reason,” it is possible to focus on the similarity between Rawls and Habermas.<sup>24</sup> That is, Habermas and Rawls represent two different schools of thought about deliberative democracy, but they emphasize the importance of rationality that transcends private interests.<sup>25</sup> It is this latter feature of their views that anchors the following analysis.

The legitimacy of institutions and laws seeking to discover and defend common interests, according to Habermas, depends on public deliberation that maintains a protective stance toward generalized interests and human rights.<sup>26</sup> As Habermas states in his essay *Three Normative Models of Democracy*: “The politically enacted law of a concrete legal community must, if it is to be legitimate, at least be compatible with moral tenets that claim universal validity going beyond the legal community.”<sup>27</sup> Rawls reaches a similar conclusion by asking: “how is it possible that there can be a stable and just society whose free and equal citizens are deeply divided by conflicting and even incommensurable religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines?”<sup>28</sup> Genuine deliberation cannot take place when comprehensive doctrines are incompatible with public reason, so Rawls puts forth the idea of an overlapping consensus as a solution. Political actors must base their decisions and choices on reasonable values that everyone else can also recognize as reasonable. Since deliberation at the institutional level means

considering and discussing the reasons “for or against a measure by a number of councilors (e.g., in a legislative assembly),”<sup>29</sup> deliberative democracy can achieve this kind of overlapping consensus by restricting the reasons that can justify political decisions.<sup>30</sup>

Some features that Linz posits as responsible for the parliamentary model’s ability to generate stability can theoretically make indirect deliberative democracy more likely. The winner-take-all element in the office of the presidency precludes deliberative practices by virtue of a president presiding alone over the executive branch. A prime minister sitting in parliament with other members of parliament does not hold such exclusive power. Sitting alone as both the head of state and the chief executive, Linz notes, creates a set of popular expectations that are very different than those of a prime minister. Moreover, a prime minister’s power relies on parliament, which therefore does not grant him or her significant autonomous power in comparison with a president. From the perspective of deliberation, the prime minister can take part in deliberation and other members of parliament can question him or her directly in a formal way, meaning that he or she is not insulated from legislative deliberation. The kind of interaction found in a legislative assembly excludes the executive in a presidential system. Perhaps the executive insulation found in presidential models can help explain why American congressman Joe Wilson (Republican) shocked American politicians and pundits by shouting “you lie!” to American President Barack Obama (Democrat) during the President’s address to Congress in 2009, which was supposed to be an uninterrupted formal speech. For many members of the United States Congress, there are few opportunities to confront the President formally and directly. As such, the presidential model offers

strong checks and balances to prevent one body from abusing political power, but an overlapping consensus requires moving beyond the negotiation of interests and this kind of separation of powers that insulates the executive.

Additionally, the electoral flexibility found in a parliamentary system can also enhance the potential for indirect deliberative democracy. While a presidential system is marked by fixed terms in office, a parliamentary model offers more electoral flexibility insofar as election cycles are not fixed. This system could allow for early elections if partisanship arises and prevents consensus. Presidential systems could include provisions that allow early elections, as Mainwaring and Shugart suggest, but this would require full-scale elections in order to preserve the separation of powers principle. As Linz notes, a parliament can rectify some legislative problems by internally changing the prime minister. The ability to change prime ministers makes indirect deliberative democracy more likely because frequent full-scale elections would excessively encumber the general population. This kind of flexibility found in a parliamentary system therefore allows greater deliberative potential by allowing frequent change if incompatible interests prevent the pursuit of consensus.

Focusing on discursive practices in governmental institutions represents a departure from the public sphere to which Habermas refers. Similarly, the benefits of a parliamentary setting alone certainly cannot guarantee Rawls' view of deliberative democracy as restricting the types of reasons employed while defending a political opinion. While the parliamentary model's institutional design can theoretically better achieve deliberative democracy indirectly, two conditions would have to be in place for parliamentary government to have any hope of achieving deliberative

democracy in the spirit of Habermasian communicative discourse and Rawlsian consensus: proportional representation and an active political culture.

### 3.2 Proportional Representation as a Precondition

Political representation often reflects the interests of those being represented, meaning that dominant power relations can extend into a representative assembly. Nancy Fraser and Seyla Benhabib, for example, identify how male-dominated power relations extend into the political realm. As Myra Marx Ferree, William Gamson, Jürgen Gerhards, and Dieter Rucht put it: “the sharp boundary between ‘politics’ and everything else that happens in life serves to obscure the continuities of power relations across these domains and is itself, therefore, a discursive use of power.”<sup>31</sup> As such, it is necessary to qualify the parliamentary model’s capacity for genuine deliberation by suggesting that this would only be possible if representation is sufficiently proportional so that many segments of society have a voice in parliament.

Elections for large-scale representative assemblies cannot achieve exact proportionality: “some ‘rounding’ must take place.”<sup>32</sup> Moreover, proportional representation can ordinarily only match the percentage of votes received with the percentage of seats allocated. Proportional representation alone therefore cannot guarantee a proportional reflection of a country’s or region’s diversity in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, religion, age, and other forms of identity. In contemporary liberal democratic countries, disproportionate representation is problematic due to the interest-based vision of democratic processes: over-representation of one group can yield a disproportionately high level of attention to that group’s

interests at the expense of an under-represented group's interests.

Advocates for proportional representation often focus on fairly representing interests, which thus delimits the role of proportional representation to balancing the representation of interests. For example, the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform released a report in 2004 that recommended implementing the single transferable vote model of proportional representation for provincial elections. One of the reasons given for this recommendation emphasizes the importance of interests: "As citizens we all are responsible for the health of our democracy, and therefore we must have the fullest possible opportunity to choose the candidates that best represent our interests."<sup>33</sup> Though proportional representation supporters may aim to proportionately represent interests in government, which is contrary to the deliberative democracy spirit of consensus, this kind of electoral model can nevertheless enhance the potential for deliberation.

As Lani Guinier states with reference to majoritarian bi-partisan government, the problem with winner-take-all elections is that it limits the role of citizens since only two real political options exist.<sup>34</sup> That is, one voice cannot make much difference. On the other hand, if multiple parties and political options exist, each vote and each voice may prove significant. This again emphasizes the role of elections as competitive arenas for defending interests. As Guinier also notes, however, proportional representation can help expand the boundaries of debate. A majoritarian electoral system stifles debate, according to Guinier, "because it drives candidates to the middle of the spectrum where most of the voters are ... the winner need not recognize or take into account legitimate, dissenting views of those in the minority."<sup>35</sup> Seen in this way, proportional

representation could help generate a sufficient diversity of perspectives to foster deliberation. Even without perfect proportionality, reaching consensus through deliberation amongst a wide of array of perspectives could ensure that a decision reached in the name of consensus truly represents a reasonable consensus free from the influence of unreasonable comprehensive doctrines.

### **3.3 Political Culture as a Precondition**

#### **3.3.1 Political Culture and Democratic Institutions**

A parliament could theoretically foster indirect deliberative democracy only if also set where a vibrant political culture is in place, where citizens actively express their views and participate in elections. This raises the question: what is the relationship between democratic institutions and political culture? The previous discussion about the potential influence of British colonial practices on parliamentary success in developing countries indicates that political culture can influence institutional performance. Robert Putnam's analysis of democratic practices in Italy considers this question more closely by statistically correlating civic engagement and institutional performance. Putnam correlates the history of civic traditions in Italy and institutional performance, which explains northern Italy's institutional success and southern Italy's institutional underperformance. Civic traditions in northern Italy, according to Putnam, fostered a political culture that helped spur economic development and by extension democratic development. Looking more closely at Putnam's historical analysis of democratic institutions in Italy helps illuminate how political culture influences democratic institutional performance, which in the end helps confirm that



parliament's institutional advantages for achieving indirect deliberative democracy can only come to fruition in settings with an active political culture.

Putnam's correlations, however, presuppose a causal relationship between civic traditions and economic development, which is problematic for two reasons. The first problem is that Putnam does not fully identify the origins of communal action in northern Italy that solved "their Hobbesian dilemmas."<sup>36</sup> Putnam claims that he is not attempting to answer a "which came first" type of question, yet he clearly builds his argument around the supposition that communal ties in the north sparked economic development. Putnam specifically claims that it is not economic development that predicts civic traditions, but it is instead civic traditions that better predict economic development. Putnam does therefore offer a "which came first" answer in spite of suggesting otherwise, and offering no explanation for the emergence of civic traditions compounds this problem. The second problem is that Putnam skips approximately four centuries of collapse in northern Italy between the original communal republics and Italian unification in the nineteenth century. In so doing, Putnam fails to identify how and what civic traditions prior to the fifteenth century relate to modern civic traditions in northern Italy.

This uncertainty over the causal relationship between political culture and institutions warrants questioning how democratic institutions emerge if the relevant political culture does not cultivate democratic practices. Several reasons may account for democratic development. One possibility is that economic development can lead a society to develop values that promote democratic practices and institutions. Putnam rejects this prospect, however, and instead insists that "economics does not predict

civics, but civics does predict economics.”<sup>37</sup> Putnam thus argues that civic traditions led to economic development, which in turn fostered political development. Rejecting economic determinism naturally raises the question: from where do civic traditions originate? As previously mentioned, though, Putnam makes it clear that he is not trying to explain whether economic conditions led to higher levels of civic engagement in northern Italy during the high Middle Ages or if it was the other way around.

While this appears to leave an important question unanswered, this question is largely irrelevant from a practical contemporary perspective because external forces or examples from external sources are much more likely to shape democratization patterns today. After all, the European Middle Ages represent a period of relative isolation between regions and limited external influence, which represent conditions that no state today will experience. As such, whatever led northern Italian republics to endogenously develop civic traditions and republican governance is likely indeterminable, but regardless of how they emerged, conditions that foster such kinds of endogenous development no longer exist. Just as northern Italy brought democratic institutions to the south,<sup>38</sup> other states are being exposed to democratic ideas and are as such more likely to bring in democratic institutions or have these institutions imposed upon them before their own cultures have sufficient time to develop in a way that endogenously creates democratic institutions.

If political culture in the cases mentioned helped generate democratic institutions, one must ask: it is possible to reverse the causal relationship and have democratic institutions shape political culture? In the case of southern Italy, its historical experience under authoritarian rule may have

rendered its core cultural understanding only minimally compatible with civic participation. The opportunity for social organizations that, according to Putnam, intermediate between individuals and formal institutions may thus have not had the opportunity to develop. Given enough time under a democratic system, though, people may realize that they do have freedom to associate and form various groups, allowing a political culture to develop that is more in line with active engagement in civic affairs. Shortly after Putnam completed his study, Sidney Tarrow had already found evidence suggesting that southern Italy was beginning to develop social capital that was translating into greater civic engagement.<sup>39</sup> This raises the possibility that it may simply take time for societies to learn how to make use of freedoms granted by new institutional frameworks.

While it may indeed take time for political culture to reflect newly found freedoms, democratic institutions do not impose cultural parameters. Instead, democratic institutions expand parameters for political action and development. While this line of argument thus appears to defend the position that institutions lead to cultural development, the point here is that institutions allow greater freedom of association and expression, which increases the likelihood for democratic political culture. In settings where democratic institutions are in place in absence of a corresponding political culture, however, democratic institutions are likely to underperform until a corresponding democratic political culture emerges.

### **3.3.2 Political Culture and Indirect Deliberative Democracy**

Political culture is clearly important for democratic institutional performance. A parliament can therefore only achieve indirect deliberative democracy in settings that not only feature proportional representation,

but also in settings where an active political culture exists. Since political culture is clearly amorphous, it is necessary to specify what kind of political culture is necessary for indirect deliberative democracy. Numerous authors have lauded political culture in the United States and in the United Kingdom as valuable for democratic governance. Giovanni Sartori, for example, finds similarities between the two states, particularly the empirical nature of each country's political culture. Sartori identifies an empirical focus in the United States and Britain, which he believes tend to be "anti-dogmatic" and "eager to learn from experience," as opposed to a rational focus found in France and other continental European countries.<sup>40</sup> Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba also find similarities between American and British political cultures. They define civic culture as an allegiant participant political culture, which synthesizes with parochial and subject orientations, and defined as such they suggest that political culture in the United States and Britain is its closest approximation in practice.<sup>41</sup>

Carole Pateman criticizes this terminology, though, by pointing out the confusing use of "civic culture" that at times appears descriptive while at other times appears to represent "an abstract model of orientations we should expect to find in the political culture of a democracy."<sup>42</sup> The public sphere as Habermas has conceptualized it appears to also draw heavily on an idealized version of American and British political culture, and for this reason Margaret Somers similarly criticizes Habermas. "Whether called political culture or public sphere," according to Somers, "the political culture concept is used in a way that is hardly *political or cultural* ... this particular 300-year-old political cultural structure is *Anglo-American citizenship theory*."<sup>43</sup> As Somers' and Pateman's critiques indicate, conceptions of political culture can appear laden with normative claims

based on an Anglo-American standard of measure.

The civic culture definition that Almond and Verba offer does, however, present standards of measure by specifying how political culture reflects political orientations, identified through the “attitudes to the political system and its various parts, and attitudes toward the role of the self in the system.”<sup>44</sup> Identifying how childhood involvement in family and school activities, for example, serves as a starting point toward developing civic culture makes it possible to define measurable influences on political culture.<sup>45</sup> As a child’s involvement in family and school activities can vary in quantity and type, such developmental activities can shape that individual’s character traits, which will influence his or her behavior in the political sphere. Their definition of political culture as the “particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of the nation” offers a more objective unit of analysis,<sup>46</sup> but the allegiant participant trait that they postulate as valuable for democracy may be more useful for this particular analysis since such traits are hypothesized to best serve democratic performance. Thus, while Pateman’s critique may highlight a valid concern with regard to cultural bias in political culture analysis, it is important not to dismiss the contributions that these insights offer since what is identified as cultural bias could actually be valid democratic standards. That is, the allegiant participant traits that Almond and Verba identify in the United States and Britain may indeed reflect each country’s culture and values, but they appear to also prove valuable for democratic performance.

For Putnam, political culture is not specifically political, but is instead defined in terms of association. Participation in community affairs and other activities that foster cooperation and trust among citizens is what

Putnam considers something like a political culture. In *Bowling Alone*, which looks at the American context, Putnam refers to social capital, which he defines as: “familiarity, tolerance, solidarity, trust, habits of cooperation, and mutual respect.”<sup>47</sup> In essence, social capital represents the various activities that animate citizen engagement in civic matters. This could include sports clubs, discussion with fellow citizens at a coffeehouse or on the bus, or membership in various organizations.<sup>48</sup> Such behavior in turn predisposes people to engaging with fellow citizens and participating in collective activities.

The kind of political culture that Putnam, Almond, and Verba present is necessary for indirect deliberative democracy for two reasons. First, active participation in political processes and activities that diffuse public views can help ensure that elected representatives consider public opinion. While a parliamentary setting in which genuine deliberation takes place among diverse representatives could generate an overlapping consensus, some form of deliberative public opinion should always serve as a check on governmental decisions. James Fishkin’s notion of a deliberative opinion poll, for example, could serve as one vehicle for translating active participation into political influence without relying on opinions that were not formed through deliberative processes. A deliberative opinion poll, according to Fishkin, simulates what the public would think if it had the opportunity to engage in intensive deliberation.<sup>49</sup> Unlike other opinion polls that simply gauge attitudes and views toward a particular issue, however, a deliberative opinion poll would have a “recommending force.”<sup>50</sup> In Fishkin’s words: “the point of a deliberative opinion poll is prescriptive, not predictive.”<sup>51</sup> A healthy political culture would make it possible for ordinary opinion polls to reflect a reasonably deliberative public opinion,

which too could then have a recommending force.

Moreover, active participation in public life can help diffuse public opinion throughout different sectors of society, which increases the informal common knowledge of public attitudes. This kind of political culture can thus fill the protective function that is so prevalent in classical republicanism. Machiavelli's writings, for instance, stress the importance of popular participation in government for preserving a republic.<sup>52</sup> "The idea is that without a widespread participation in democratic politics by a vigorous and informed citizen body," Rawls summarizes, "even the most well-designed political institutions will fall into the hands of those who seek to dominate and impose their will through the state apparatus."<sup>53</sup> Parliament's greater electoral flexibility conceivably allows greater connection to public opinion, for if representatives can set aside their private interests they have the power to dissolve a government that grossly contradicts public consensus as reflected in public opinion polls.

An active political culture is necessary for indirect deliberative democracy for a second reason: it can serve as an educational force. Many have commented on political participation and its educational function. Alexis de Tocqueville, for example, observed while traveling in the United States for nine months in the nineteenth century: "the education of the people powerfully contributes to maintenance of the democratic republic."<sup>54</sup> The type of education to which Tocqueville refers is not simply literacy and arithmetic. The education that Tocqueville saw as so crucial to democracy was instead the education that Americans gained by participating in the legislative process.<sup>55</sup> In so doing, Americans from all ranks became intelligent in the matters of state and fit to govern:

"[Ask an American] about his own country and you will see the

mist clouding his mind melt away at once; his language and his thought will become lucid, sharp, and precise; he will inform you of his rights and how he has to exercise them; he will know the principles which govern the world of politics. You will see that he knows about administrative regulations and that he has familiarized himself with the workings of the law.”<sup>56</sup>

In short, Americans were according to Tocqueville incredibly knowledgeable about their government because they were active in the governing process. It is quite possible that Tocqueville overstated and over-generalized the nineteenth-century American familiarity with democratic procedures, but his reasoning is sound that participation in politics is a powerful pedagogical force. While knowledge of rules and procedures is not a sufficient condition for reasonable deliberation, this kind of knowledge is certainly a necessary condition.

John Stuart Mill also envisioned that active participation in the form of voting and public deliberation could educate citizens. “Among the foremost benefits of free government is that education of the intelligence and of the sentiment,” according to Mill, “which is carried down to the very lowest ranks of the people when they are called to take part in acts which directly affect the great interests of their country.”<sup>57</sup> This kind of education helps citizens identify those who are best able to govern and recognize when they make good political decisions. Though Pateman also believes that political participation can have an educational effect, she doubts that the limited kind of political participation that Mill envisioned would educate citizens since they would not be able to influence government and therefore would have no motivation to discuss and participate.<sup>58</sup> However, with a proportionally representative parliament



that responds more closely to public opinion, citizens would have the motivation that Pateman contends is lacking in Mill's vision. By engaging regularly in public affairs and becoming familiar with government, citizens can come to recognize the diversity of opinions and the need to cooperate with fellow citizens. This educational function is thus crucial for deliberation and citizens being able to set aside their private comprehensive doctrines—and this environment is essential for raising those who will become representatives in a system of indirect deliberative democracy.

#### **4. Conclusion**

A parliamentary model's institutional features offer greater potential to move representative democracy toward indirect deliberative democracy. While indirect deliberative democracy may appear procedurally synonymous with representative democracy, the focus is meant to lie instead on the potential for genuine deliberation to influence representatives' decisions and increased connection to public opinion. Two conditions must be in place for a parliament to reach its potential in terms of indirect deliberative democracy. If representation is truly proportional so as to assure sufficient diversity in legislative decision-making and an active political culture fosters the individual traits necessary for deliberation, the deliberation that takes place in a parliamentary setting could yield something along the lines of an overlapping consensus.

With the right conditions in place, the parliamentary model specifically could best serve as this representative deliberative forum due to its institutional features. While the presidential model's system of checks and

balances may offer greater protection against abuse of power by government, as Mainwaring and Shugart suggest, the parliamentary model offers greater space for deliberation by having the executive and legislative branches sit in house together. That is, a presidential model generally presents an antagonistic relationship between the legislative and executive branch, and as Linz argues, competing claims to legitimacy arise since each is elected separately and can therefore lay claim to holding a public mandate. By contrast, a parliament seats representatives who are elected to serve equally with other members and the prime minister and cabinet are selected from this pool of representatives, meaning that the executive is not insulated from deliberation. Moreover, parliament's electoral flexibility can more closely connect government to public opinion and dissolve more easily if comprehensive doctrines overwhelm the pursuit of consensus.

While Linz makes a strong case for the value of the parliamentary model in emerging democracies, the preceding analysis demonstrates that the parliamentary model can most closely realize deliberative democracy ideals in mature democracies. Conditions are often far from ideal in developing states, and as such, the argument that Linz advances may prove valuable in such settings where there is little historical precedent for democratic government and where instability holds the potential for violence. Unlike Linz's defense of parliamentary models that presents the perils of presidentialism, however, situating the presidential and parliamentary debate within the context of Habermasian and Rawlsian ideals instead offers the theoretical prospects of parliamentarism in mature democracies. These conditions clearly cannot guarantee that representatives would set aside their own interests to pursue an

overlapping consensus. Nevertheless, “a constitutional regime may be more likely to realize those principles and the ideals of free public reason and deliberative democracy,” and, according to Rawls, “when these principles and ideals are realized, if only in part, the idea of the good of political society is also realized in part and is experienced by citizens as such.”<sup>59</sup> As the preceding analysis has demonstrated, further specifying the constitutional regime as a parliamentary one and focusing on its prospects for indirect deliberative democracy can help bring the idea of this good political society one step closer to reality.

## End Notes

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