Structure and Process in Federal and Consociational Arrangements

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Daniel J. Elazar uses the concepts of structure and process to distinguish between federal and consociational arrangements. While the distinction is appropriate and useful, it does have limitations, and in some respects may be slightly misleading. It is argued here that under certain circumstances, political structures can play an important role in defining or promoting consociational arrangements, even if such structures were originally the result of social forces. An additional point made is that in both federations and consociations, the relationship between structure and process is essentially reciprocal. It is suggested that more attention be paid to the differences in the kinds of structures found in the two forms of governance and, in turn, how they might be linked to differences in process. At this stage, it appears that consociations are much more confederal in form, which has certain consequences for the manner in which conflict is both structured and resolved.

In several respects, it is easier to list what federalism and consociationalism have in common than what they do not. Both forms of governance entail a rejection of simple majoritarian democracy, and both are frequently seen as conflict reducing devices or social control mechanisms. Thus, while there is basic agreement that the two concepts do overlap, there is much less agreement on when or where the overlapping begins or ends, a state of affairs which is in part due to the lack of a basic consensus, particularly on what constitutes a federation but also on what defines consociationalism.

If there is one point of demarcation between the two concepts on which there is common agreement, it is that the territorial dimension, and the areal distribution of power, most clearly distinguishes federal from consociational arrangements. Yet one senses that the territorial issue is not the only, or even the most important difference. It is in this respect that Daniel J. Elazar very usefully proposes a further dimension, one which potentially allows us not only to distinguish the two forms more clearly but also to examine with greater precision the actual linkages.[1]

According to Elazar, the concepts of "structure" and "process" can be used to identify the salient aspects of consociational and federal arrangements. By "structure" Elazar means formal rules as embodied in constitutions and institutions, while the term "process" implies both informal behavior and culture.[2] Essentially he argues that federalism is much more dependent on

[1]D.J. Elazar, "Federalism and Consociational Regimes," p. 23.
[2]Ibid.

structure, while consociationalism is more reflective of sociological conditions. Further, he asserts not only that federalism enjoys more of a formal existence but also that it frequently can be seen as an end in itself while consociationalism is more a means to an end, that is the achievement of political stability.[3]

The implications of Elazar's proposition are obvious: consociations in the main should be seen as informal, process oriented, conflict reducing mechanisms of a temporary nature, while federations should be seen as arrangements of much greater certainty and permanence, embodying within their formal rules and institutions the nobler goals and values of a society. In light of the alleged impermanence of consociations, one would want to be careful in embracing proposals for "consociational engineering," such as those advocated by Arend Lijphart among others.[4]

However, as in the case of all novel and innovative propositions, a reasonable amount of testing and scrutinizing of Elazar's structure versus process dimension would appear to be desirable in order to check its essential validity and explore some of its less apparent ramifications. The aim of this article is to do precisely that: to explore this dimension further and its application with respect to some specific examples of consociationalism and federalism. The intent is not necessarily to undermine the credibility of Elazar's basic generalization; in its broad outline, it appears to be basically correct. I will suggest, however, that the difference between consociations and federations, in terms of structure and process, is not quite as clear-cut as it might seem at first glance. Furthermore, in suggesting that structure is of some importance in consociations, it may be worth identifying the particular instances or circumstances in which structure does play a role in promoting consociational practices, instances which might easily be glossed over in Elazar's broad generalization. My argument, essentially, is that in consociations, structure is important as a way of channeling conflict and providing incentives or disincentives for elites to engage in accommodative behavior, and that in both federal and consociational arrangements, the relationship between structure and process is essentially a reciprocal one. The conclusion will suggest that perhaps it is differences in the *kinds* of structures found in the two forms that serve as a point of demarcation and help explain differences between them in the way conflict is shaped and resolved.

I will proceed by examining the role of structure and process, and the question of whether one or the other form of governance stands more as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end. For illustrative purposes I will refer mainly, though not exclusively, to Canada and The Netherlands, the one constituting what is at present a good example of a decentralized federation, the other an example of what used to be, and to some extent still is, a full-scale consociation.

[3]Ibid., pp. 26-28, 30.

[4]A. Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies: A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 223-238.

THE ROLE OF STRUCTURE

In discussing the effects of structure, it might be best to begin by pointing out that in one sense the term may be somewhat misleading or even inappropriate. This is due to one essential element shared by both consociationalism and federalism, namely, the incompleteness of their political union. The territories or the subcultures involved in the arrangement are unwilling, or unable, to exist on their own as sovereign states; yet, at the same time, they are unwilling to renounce all claims to sovereignty. Although clearly it is not possible (or at least extremely difficult) for non-territorial groupings to secede; nevertheless, a common characteristic of genuine federations and consociations is that subunits wish autonomy, but simultaneously perceive the necessity for some kind of association or cooperation.[5]

The notion of incompleteness points to the ambiguity of the term "structure" and explains why there often is so little correspondence between formal structure and process, particularly in federations. The relationships between the units, and between the units and the central government, are often in tension and constantly changing and evolving. In the case of federations, this explains why the formal, written constitution is often a very poor guide to actual practice or, generally, to the nature of the federal relationship, and why the term "constitutional rigidity" can be quite misleading. For example, K.C. Wheare, after having outlined the formal characteristics of different federations, then proceeded to outline the actual practice, which often differed considerably from what was in the formal documents.[6] Thus, Wheare describes Canada in constitutional terms as only a quasi-federation; but in actual effect, given the way the constitutional provisions have been interpreted, Wheare and others have accepted it as a genuine federation. Furthermore, while the formal rules of the constitution may remain constant, their meaning and interpretation inevitably change, often quite radically and within a relatively short period of time. In Canada, for instance, over the past few decades a number of authors have extolled the virtues of "our flexible constitution,"[7] thereby indicating that we need to clarify what we mean by "constitutional rigidity." In the case of consociations, the rules are fewer and simpler and often less formal (e.g., the rule of proportionality, mutual veto, and the like), but at the same time, there is probably a greater correspondence between these rules and actual practice.

This brings us to the role of structure in consociations. Elazar claims that while federalism involves both structures and processes of government, "con-

[5]Ivo D. Duchacek notes that in federal systems, subnational units are often subject to contradictory feelings of "let us alone" and "let us in." *Comparative Federalism: The Territorial Dimension of Politics* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), p. 356. In The Netherlands during the nineteenth century, orthodox Calvinists promulgated the notion of "sovereignty in one's own circle" in arguing for a high level of subcultural autonomy. See fn. 25.

[6]K.C. Wheare, *Federal Government* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946).

[7]See for example: E.R. Black and A.C. Cairns, "A Different Perspective on Canadian Federalism," *Canadian Public Administration* 9 (March 1966): 27-45.

sociationalism involves processes only," although he does note that political parties and party systems may play a role as the only formal structures in a consociational arrangement.

If one means *political* structure only, Elazar may perhaps be correct. However, this semantic definition glosses over two important points. First, it ignores the role of structure in society generally. We need only point to the contribution made by Philip Selznick and others on the extent to which social life is institutionalized and how this institutionalization affects both social and political behavior.[8] The manner in which institutionalized pressure groups structure political demands is but one example. Second, Elazar's definition ignores the highly organized nature of the subcultures in such classic consociations as The Netherlands and Austria. Indeed, such writers as Val Lorwin, Ronald Rogowski and others argue that in the case of these countries, without organization and structure, there would be no subcultures.[9] Ideological differences—as opposed to distinctive stigmata such as race or language—separate the subcultural blocs in question, and these differences are made manifest largely by means of organization. The Dutch Catholic pillar is perhaps the best example of such a subculture: religious and social values were propagated and maintained largely through the organizational medium of the Church, and the Church fostered a wide variety of social organizations, many of them attaining quasi-corporate political status, which successfully cut across and repressed what some saw as more natural class-based communities.[10]

In discussing consociations, however, I would not want to restrict the role of structure to the sociological realm. One can further argue that in The Netherlands, whatever the origins of the subcultures, government structure too played an enormously powerful role in the development of the Dutch pillars, the blocs whose differences Lijphart claims were mediated through elite accommodation. The pillars really did not begin to flourish until after World War I, and the evidence is reasonably clear that this was, in large part, a function of government structure. The specific structure is the settlement of 1917, otherwise known as the Pacification, which represented the resolution of two important and contentious issues: full state support for parochial schools, demanded by the confessional blocs, and extension of the fran-

[8]P. Selznick, *Leadership in Administration* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957).

[9]V. Lorwin, "Segmented Pluralism: Ideological Cleavages and Political Cohesion in the Smaller European Democracies," *Comparative Politics* 3 (January 1971): esp., 143-144; R. Rogowski, *Rational Legitimacy: A Theory of Political Support* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974); Brian Barry, "Political Accommodation and Consociational Democracy," *British Journal of Political Science* 5 (1975): 477-505. Barry feels that consociations are unlikely to work when the blocs or pillars are based on ethnicity or language as opposed to organization. Lijphart feels differently. For Lijphart's discussion on this point, see *Democracy in Plural Societies*, pp. 231-232.

[10]See H. Bakvis, *Catholic Power in The Netherlands* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 1981), *passim*.

chise.[11] The result of the compromise, which involved all major blocs in Dutch society, was full subsidization of confessional school systems, including universities, and the introduction of a proportional electoral system with an extended franchise. The rule of proportionality and subcultural autonomy, key features of the consociational arrangement, was embodied in formal legislation. The 1917 Pacification subsequently acted as a kind of template whereby its principles came to be applied to such fields as broadcasting, health, welfare and recreation, which in no small way aided the growth of subcultural institutions. These rules and institutions can be seen as instrumentalities, to borrow William Livingston's concept,[12] used by the subcultures in a highly entrepreneurial fashion to further their own ends; but in many respects, like instrumentalities in the case of federations, they came to have an independent effect in shaping the development of the Dutch pillars, making them much more viable than they might have been otherwise.

In short, these sociological groupings needed the stimulus and reinforcement provided by political rules and laws. This was true not just for The Netherlands. In discussing developments in Western Europe generally, Philipe Schmitter notes that it was the "coercive intervention of the modern bureaucratic state to subsidize organizational existence," among other state action, which helped put mass-based associations on a much more solid footing.[13] One can point to the further example of Austria to see how a wide range of semi-public bodies and organizations came to reinforce the existence of the two main ideological camps or *Lager*.

The growth and development of European subcultural blocs described above bears more than passing resemblance to what a number of writers in Canada have referred to as province building. For example, Alan Cairns has stated that the basis for federalism in Canada is a constitution which has provided political entrepreneurs with the tools for seeking and obtaining power.[14] Perhaps Cairns downplays the role of language and culture unduly, but in so doing he does help us see all ten Canadian provinces as distinct socio-political phenomena. Although there may be little in the way of racial, ethnic, or linguistic stigmata to distinguish the largely English language provinces from each other, it does appear that the concentration of a population within a distinct territorial unit promotes the development of internal communications networks and offers a simple and straightforward criterion for discriminating, positively or negatively, against a bloc of individuals. Given that local elites are much more attuned to local needs by virtue of their proximity to citizens, and that they have at their disposal important powers such

[11]Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in The Netherlands* (2nd ed.; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 109–112.

[12]W. Livingston, *Federalism and Constitutional Change* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956).

[13]P. Schmitter, "Interest intermediation and regime governability in contemporary Western Europe and North America," *Organizing Interests in Western Europe*, ed. S. Berger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 291.

[14]Cairns, "The Governments and Societies of Canadian Federalism," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 10 (December 1977): 695–725.

as control over education, civil law and natural resources in Canada, one has all the ingredients necessary for the creation of cohesive and powerful socio-political entities.[15]

In summary, a case can be made that the territorial units in Canada are in several respects on par with the so-called organized subcultures of West European consociations. Initial social, economic, and political considerations give rise to the consociational/federal arrangement; the political rules and structures governing the distribution of powers and resources then often have the reciprocal effect of reinforcing the identities and character of the subcultural blocs in question, frequently in combination with entrepreneurship on the part of political and social elites. These identities and activities in turn will affect the formal structures and so on.

PROCESS IN FEDERATIONS AND CONSOCIATIONS

It should be stressed that what has been discussed so far is the way structure helps define and even enhance the differences and the basic relationships between units or, if you like, the basic underpinnings of consociations and federations. We now turn to a discussion of process. However, just as it is impossible to speak of the development of specific structures without referring to the processes which brought them about, so is it impossible to discuss the informal processes implied in concepts like cooperative federalism or elite accommodation without referring to basic structures which either necessitate or induce such practices.

The first point is to note one important way in which Elazar's notion of process helps us to distinguish consociationalism from federalism. For a system to be defined as consociational, there has to be evidence of elite accommodation—a very specific process which is not to be confused with other kinds of accommodation. Elite accommodation lies at the heart of any true consociational arrangement; it is *the* factor which is both necessary and, in combination with certain facilitating factors, sufficient to integrate a divided or fragmented society, and it can only be described in behavioral terms, such as "the will to cooperate," "compromise," or "fear of system collapse."[16] In contrast, many definitions of federalism do not specify any kind of process. It can be argued that these definitions are lacking in their failure to incorporate some notion of process or informal behavior. This may well be true. However, what is important to note is not necessarily that notions of process are often absent but that a wide variety of practices can be utilized to render the federal arrangement workable or, in those cases where federalism coincides with deep divisions within the society, politically stable. Elite accommodation is but one of a number of informal mechanisms.

[15]See H. Bakvis, *Federalism and the Organization of Political Life: Canada in Comparative Perspective* (Kingston: Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 1981), esp. pp. 40-55.

[16]See Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation,* pp. 181-195.

A variety of such mechanisms have been discussed by Daniel Elazar, A.H. Birch, and Roger Gibbins, among others, under the rubrics of intra-state federalism, cooperative federalism, interdependence, and so on. These mechanisms are often broadly based; that is, accommodation is not just restricted to elites.[17] In most federations, the objective is to work out differences between central and local governments and to a considerable extent between the units themselves, usually concerning the development and implementation of policies and programs affecting both levels of government. However, more serious conflicts can also be handled in these more broadly based arenas; whether these practices are superior to, or more democratic than, the technique of elite accommodation is not really at issue here.

Thus in a unitary state like The Netherlands, when elite accommodation ceases to play an important role, the label consociationalism no longer applies. In the case of federations, the cessation of accommodative practices by elites, or the introduction of other kinds of accommodative practices, would not necessarily entail dropping the term "federalism." The Canadian case illustrates this basic point.

It has been suggested that at various times elite accommodation in Canada has been important in bringing about integration and cooperation. Most recently the concept has been applied to the federal-provincial conference, an extremely important arena for resolving federal-provincial and interprovincial differences and policymaking generally.[18] It is worth noting that the existence of this arena is nowhere acknowledged in the old constitution and is mentioned only obliquely in the revised constitution. By and large the structure of government in Canada (i.e., the Westminster model, which operates at the provincial and federal levels) places inordinate power in the hands of political executives, thereby forcing most interactions between governments to take place at the level of first ministers and top level cabinet ministers and minimizing interactions at lower levels. National political parties have virtually ceased to play a role in bringing federal and provincial ministers together.[19] Within this arena, and under the rubric of executive federalism, political and bureaucratic elites were able for a number of decades to operate in relative secrecy and resolve a variety of issues, though certainly not all issues. Particularly during the 1960s, in the face of demands from Quebec for greater autonomy, elites engaged in what can be termed "system saving behavior."

[17]Elazar, *The American Partnership* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962); Birch, *Federalism, Finance, and Social Legislation in Canada, Australia and the United States* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1955); Gibbins, *Regionalism: Territorial Politics in Canada and the United States* (Toronto: Butterworths, 1982).

[18]On consociationalism in Canada generally see the various contributions in K.D. McRae, ed., *Consociational Democracy: Political Accommodation in Segmented Societies* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974). On the role of the federal-provincial conference, see R. Simeon, *Federal-Provincial Diplomacy: The Making of Recent Policy in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), Chapter 1.

[19]D.V. Smiley, *Canada in Question: Federalism in the Eighties* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1980).

During the 1970s, however, important changes took place: the intergovernmental process became, if not more open, at least much more visible; mass publics and the media began taking a more active interest in federal-provincial affairs; and political elites, especially those of the English speaking Western provinces, began to develop much firmer policy positions, often tied to broader ideological stances, which led to an impasse on various issues. Many would argue, myself included, that in the past decade very little accommodation has taken place within the federal-provincial arena, excepting perhaps the example of the constitutional accord of November 1981, which did not include Quebec. At the same time, very little accommodation has occurred outside this arena. But the general lack of accommodative behavior does not mean that Canada is in any way less of a federation.

It is the presence, therefore, of a particular process in divided societies, that is elite accommodation, which permits one to place a federation, or any system for that matter, into the consociational category. One must further be able to show that elite accommodation does indeed play an important role in defusing conflict at the mass level or in bringing about a degree of integration of diverse units. Ultimately this informal behavior is dependent upon the perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of the participants; formal rules cannot guarantee cooperation among elites.

The lack of such a guarantee notwithstanding, it is important to note that structure can and often does play a role either in bringing elites together or in restricting the number of policy options; this holds not just for federal consociations but also for non-federal consociations. We have already noted the manner in which sociological and political institutions help to define and highlight differences and conflict between subcultural blocs. Aspects of these same institutions, however, can also act as incentives for elites to cooperate. Structural incentives may exist, such as the federal-provincial first-ministers conference in Canada, which bring elites together and thereby help induce cooperative behavior, though again, as in the proverbial case of bringing horses to water, there is no guarantee that they will indeed cooperate. In the case of unitary systems, the structure of political competition may be such as to preclude the alternative of majority rule. That is, if the two major parties in a two-party system are in virtual balance, or if there are more than two parties none of which are capable of obtaining a majority (often because of the stable voting support provided to the parties by their well defined organized social bases), then there is little choice but to cooperate in order to avoid a high level of political instability.

Gerhard Lehmbruch has suggested that this is true not only for the smaller democracies like The Netherlands and Austria but also for West Germany where one can detect consociational practices behind a majoritarian facade.[20] Lehmbruch points to other structural features which are important in helping to bring about non-majoritarian practices. In Switzerland, the

[20]G. Lehmbruch, *Parteienwettbewerb im Bundesstaat* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1976).

referendum procedure introduced in the 1870s, "permitted the formation of coalitions of minorities that were able to block the majoritarian mechanism, and thus led to the cooptation of the minority parties into government."[21] Although the Swiss referendum procedure is generally considered part of its federal constitution, it can in fact be seen as quite independent of federalism and as such perhaps applicable to unitary systems as well.

Before leaving the topic of process, I would like to raise one further issue; this concerns the formal model of consociationalism, particularly as applied to The Netherlands. The model sees the blocs or pillars as entities insulated from one another with little communication occurring at the mass level; bloc leaders enjoy ample authority over their followers and act as primary if not sole communicators with the leaders of other blocs. It is the accommodation reached between these elites which then explains the stability of the system. One might want to be careful, however, in accepting this interpretation too literally. Just as the watertight compartments metaphor as applied to federations may be highly inaccurate, so too may be the notion that the pillars in consociations are segregated except at the top.

The high level of social segmentation in The Netherlands, that is, the restricting of memberships in social and economic organizations to those of one's own faith or ideology, has been well documented by Lijphart and others; but this does not necessarily mean that the blocs are impermeable or that cooperation is absent at the mass level. Prior to deconfessionalization in the 1960s and early 1970s, many individuals would frequently tune in to broadcasts produced by other blocs, even though they subscribed to and supported the broadcasting organization of their own pillar. In the Dutch sociological literature one can also find examples of workers in the same plant, but belonging to different trade unions (i.e., Protestant, Catholic, and socialist), joining together on committees to discuss working conditions and the like. The composition of town and city councils reflects the heterogeneous nature of local populations, most councils having representation from the different socio-religious blocs. For these local institutions to be effective, some kind of coalition is usually required, and this has often been the case. The existence of nearly one thousand municipalities in The Netherlands would suggest that, over the years, cooperative activity was not restricted to higher echelon elites only. How important these sorts of activities at lower levels of society were in contributing to the stability of the Dutch polity, or whether these activities were sufficiently extensive so as to undermine the validity of the elite accommodation model, is at this point not clear. It would seem evident, however, that a proper appreciation of both federalism and consociationalism requires close examination of sociological and political processes

[21]Lehmbruch, "Federalism and Consociationalism: Some Comments" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, Illinois, September 1983, pp. 1-2.

at all levels of society.[22]

CONSOCIATIONALISM AS AN END IN ITSELF?

Elazar states that while both federalism and consociationalism are often seen as a means to an end, federalism is also frequently seen as an end in itself.[23] Again, as a broad generalization, Elazar's claim is quite likely accurate. The U.S. Constitution of 1787 represents far more than a pragmatic agreement to resolve outstanding differences; it represents the hopes, aspirations, and ideals of American civil society and, at the time, was intended to endure far into the future. Even the Canadian federation of 1867, though certainly not the product of a people having just fought a revolution, nevertheless was envisioned as something more than a solution to immediate and pressing concerns.

By the same token, however, it would be inaccurate to represent something like the 1917 Pacification in The Netherlands as merely a conflict reducing device. The compromise was four years in the making and required elaborate procedures and subterfuge involving all political parties.[24] Overall it represented a fairly comprehensive reworking of the country's constitutional framework. Although Liberals and Socialists at the time, as well as later, may have seen pillarization and the constitutional settlement as a rather odious necessity, there were others who saw it as both a natural and desired state of affairs. Thus Abraham Kuyper, the nineteenth-century leader of the Calvinist Anti-Revolutionary Party, propounded the notion of "sovereignty within one's own circle,"[25] arguing that control over schools and related institutions was necessary for Calvinists to conduct their social and religious life as they saw fit, without necessarily wishing to impose their values on others. Catholics, in turn, though never fully accepting that The Netherlands was at least nominally a Protestant state, nevertheless saw in pillarization and consociationalism much that was of value to them: they had control over their cultural institutions, particularly schools, and enjoyed considerable influence within coalition cabinets. Some have also argued that both pillarization and consociationalism fitted in very well with certain strands of Catholic corporatist thought popular in the 1930s and early postwar period.[26]

Proportional representation is part and parcel of the Dutch constitution. Presently the basic protection afforded to the religious broadcasting

[22]For some of the sociological literature bearing on this topic see I. Gadourek, *A Dutch Community: Social and Cultural Structure and Process in a Bulb-growing Region in The Netherlands* (Leiden: Stenfert Kroese, 1956), pp. 133–135. Also Bakvis, *Catholic Power in The Netherlands,* pp. 16–18, 177–178.

[23]Elazar, "Federalism and Consociational Regimes," p. 29.

[24]Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation,* pp. 111–112.

[25]See D. Jellema, "Abraham Kuyper's Attack on Liberalism," *Review of Politics* 19 (1957): 472–485.

[26]See I. Scholten, "Does Consociationalism Exist? A Critique of the Dutch Experience," *Electoral Participation,* ed. R. Rose (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980), pp. 347–350.

organizations in the broadcasting act is regarded as sacrosanct by Catholics and Protestants. Even though actual consociational practices may presently be lacking in The Netherlands, much of the basic institutional and constitutional framework is still intact.[27] In short, there is an argument to be made that consociationalism is not always seen entirely in instrumentalist terms; it can and at times has been accepted as something to be valued in and of itself. Efforts at consociational engineering in various parts of the world by constitutional means would also suggest that more may be involved than the construction of coalition cabinets of a temporary nature or short-lived regimes.[28]

CONCLUSION

The distinction drawn by Elazar between structure and process is both meaningful and useful. At a minimum it brings a certain amount of pattern to an area with a great deal of conceptual clutter. I have argued, however, that in actual practice consociations and federations may be quite a bit closer on the structure versus process dimension than what might be evident at first glance, though elite accommodation continues to stand out as a specific process unique to consociational arrangements.

Are there any further dimensions which could conceivably help distinguish consociationalism from federalism? The concept of corporatism, describing an ordered set of relationships between social, political, and economic groupings, appears to have some affinity with our two forms of governance.[29] However, I do not intend to explore it here in any detail; it overlaps with both consociationalism and federalism but is coterminous with neither. The links appear closest between corporatism and consociationalism; that is, both are characterized by cooperation between separate but significant groups and a high level of social control. However, it is possible to point to consociations which are not really corporatist and federations which are corporatist, thereby undermining the idea of a necessary link between consociationalism and corporatism.

Rather than pursuing other lines of inquiry, I would like to suggest that the differences are best understood in terms of basic differences in the kinds of structures found in federations and consociations. Differences in institutions, forms, and essential practices affect political interactions, of both the cooperative and conflictual type, in divergent ways.

The first point of difference relates to the structure of political authority and governance. It is evident that consociations are basically confederal in form: the interests and preferences of citizens are mediated through the pillars

[27]J.M.G. Thurlings, "Pluralism and Assimilation in The Netherlands," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 20 (March-June 1979): 82-100.

[28]Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies,* pp. 223-238.

[29]K.D. McRae, "Comment: Federation, Consociation, Corporatism—An Addendum to Arend Lijphart," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 12 (1979): 517-522.

and their parties; coalition governments in turn tend to be beholden to the elites of those parties; and, as Lijphart has documented in the case of The Netherlands, citizens tend to be rather remote from the central government. In a true federal arrangement, the central government is not beholden to the other units (and if it were it would be a confederation); it has a separate and distinct existence, enjoying a direct mandate from citizens through elections. Some federations, such as the German and the Swiss, do have confederal tendencies (e.g., in West Germany members of the Bundesrat are appointed by the *Länder*); but by and large, the distinction holds, and some important implications with respect to the structuring of political conflict stem from it. In federations such as Canada most conflict occurs between the provinces and the central government rather than between the provinces themselves. Even where disputes are essentially inter-provincial, the tendency is for the provinces involved to minimize their differences and blame the federal government for their dilemma. One of the primary reasons for this is that the provinces have no responsibility for the makeup of, and the policies pursued by, the central government. This is clearly not the case with consociations: the blocs or pillars are directly responsible for the construction of broadly based coalition governments. Conflict, when it occurs, will be between the blocs themselves. This basic structural distinction contributes to differences in the way citizens relate to their government(s), the manner in which conflicts are resolved, and the means used to handle questions concerning the legitimacy of regimes.

The other important difference concerns the territorial dimension. This is an obvious one, and is one which is frequently mentioned; however, the implications need to be explored further with respect to the structuring of political conflict. Clearly when a disaffected group has a territorial basis, then secession becomes an option, one which is not available in pure consociations in which distinct territorial bases are lacking. This would make it easier for the breakup of a federation whereas in a consociation, intermingled populations might have little choice but to try to reach some kind of consensus; the alternative would be civil strife. This does suggest that if differences are irreconcilable, and efforts at elite accommodation, for example, prove unavailing, then in the case of federations territorial secession may in the long run result in much less bloodshed and conflict, however lamentable such a breakup might be. Witness the case of East and West Pakistan.

Territorial secession is an extreme option even in federations. However, there are further implications involving territory at lower levels of conflict, and they concern the types of issues likely to arise and the rule of proportionality. Briefly, when conflict is in large part based on territorial differences, it becomes much more difficult to placate disaffected groups by means of allocating valued goods and resources on a proportional basis. In The Netherlands, given the pluralistic economic character of most of the pillars, policies concerning economic development, restructuring, and the like

affect the different blocs in roughly equal fashion. In federations, however, questions of industrial location, the letting of government contracts, and similar issues are much more likely to be seen in zero-sum terms: a gain for one territorial unit is often perceived as a loss for another. When linguistic differences combine with the territorial dimension, matters tend to be exacerbated even further. In Canada recently, federal government aid to bring a new automobile plant to the province of Ontario was condemned by the government of the predominantly French-speaking province of Quebec as a deliberate act of discrimination. Similar examples can be found in countries like Belgium where economic differences between Flanders and Wallonia help to fuel linguistic disputes. Economic conflicts are much more likely to arise, or be added to, long-standing grievances in federal systems, and to be seen in zero-sum terms.

The greater difficulty of employing the proportionality rule may make life more difficult in federations. By the same token, however, it may be that the territorial dimension, in combination with the features unique to federalism, makes it easier for units to disengage or simply to put disputes on hold without immobilizing the entire system. The point of contrast here is the informal but very real veto power enjoyed by blocs involved in a pure non-territorial consociational arrangement. Withdrawal by one of the parties in the consociational coalition invariably brings about the collapse of the government. This has the effect of immobilizing to a fair degree the operations of the central government, often for lengthy periods. In a federation like Canada disputes between governments are unlikely to lead to the collapse of a cabinet at either level. Hence, in this sense, there is greater stability in federations; in Canada, federal and provincial governments are able to continue governing, and other policy areas are not likely to be affected immediately.

The above discussion referred to some basic structural characteristics. Lijphart, in his factor analysis of non-majoritarian attributes of consociational and federal systems, has identified what are essentially two sets of specific structural features, linked to consociationalism and federalism respectively.[30] One could argue that the lists of attributes are not as complete as they might be, or that some of the attributes need to be defined more carefully.[31] Nevertheless it is a useful beginning. What needs to be done now is to examine their effects on political process and vice versa. Consociations and federations are extraordinarily difficult animals to pin down. However, the concepts of structure and process, and an understanding of how they relate to each other, are among the more useful tools we have available for ascertaining the way these systems actually function.

[30]Lijphart, "Non-Majoritarian Democracy: A Comparison of Federal and Consociational Theories," pp. 10–12.

[31]For example, I wonder whether Lijphart's "decentralization" attribute, a characteristic of federations and defined in terms of taxation revenues, can really tap the notion of subcultural autonomy, an important feature of pure consociational systems.