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Arend Lijphart and the 'New Institutionalism'

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March and Olsen (1984: 734) characterize a new institutionalist approach to politics that "emphasizes relative autonomy of political institutions, possibilities for inefficiency in history, and the importance of symbolic action to an understanding of politics." Among the other points they assert to be characteristic of this "new institutionalism" are the recognition that processes may be as important as outcomes (or even more important), and the recognition that preferences are not fixed and exogenous but may change as a function of political learning in a given institutional and historical context. However, in my view, there are three key problems with the March and Olsen synthesis.

First, in looking for a common ground of belief among those who use the label "new institutionalism" for their work, March and Olsen are seeking to impose a unity of perspective on a set of figures who actually have little in common. March and Olsen (1984) lump together apples, oranges, and artichokes: neo-Marxists, symbolic interactionists, and learning theorists, all under their new institutionalist umbrella. They recognize that the ideas they ascribe to the new institutionalists are "not all mutually consistent. Indeed some of them seem mutually inconsistent" (March and Olsen, 1984: 738), but they slough over this paradox for the sake of typological neatness.

Second, March and Olsen (1984) completely neglect another set of figures, those associated with positive political theory in political science and with game theoretic and/or Public Choice approaches in economics, who surely also deserve the label "new institutionalists." [\(1\)](#)

Third, and most important for present purposes, March and Olsen (1984) completely neglect the revival of interest in institutions in comparative politics that was already underway in political science long before the term "new institutionalism" became popular -- especially that in the area of electoral systems research (see, e.g., Rae, 1967, 1971) and in constitutional design.[\(2\)](#) In both these areas Lijphart's work had already played (e.g., Lijphart, 1975, 1977a, b) and would continue to play a major role (see, e.g., Lijphart and Grofman, 1984; Grofman and Lijphart, 1986; Lijphart, 1992; Lijphart, 1994). While some might say this research was merely a continuation of the "old institutionalism," a style of approach that had never really gone away,[\(3\)](#) even though it was supplanted in importance by other approaches such as that of the Michigan School (with its strong emphasis on public opinion), in my view there are sufficiently many distinctive aspects of the institutionalist focus that have become associated with Lijphart (and now his students) that it deserves separate recognition as an important and separate strain of the "new" institutionalism.[\(4\)](#)

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My argument for the claims to recognition of a distinctively Lijphartian approach to institutional analysis is strengthened by the fact that March and Olsen's (1984) own claims for the novelty of the ideas they attribute to the new institutionalist strains they talk about are based on a "potted" history of political science that bears little resemblance to anything I can recognize. In contrast to the insights of the "new institutionalist" ideas they discuss, March and Olsen (1984: 738) see post-1950's political science as emphasizing the aggregating of individual behavior motivated by utilitarian and instrumental concerns. They also view political science of this period as by and large seeing politics as subordinated to other features of the social environment such as class, ethnicity, economics, and religion; and they assert that political scientists have been functionalist, by which they mean that political scientists have tended to view politics as the outcome of a generally beneficent process of historical adaptation.

Clearly, any attempt to paint with a broad brush tendencies allegedly characteristic of all of modern political science can be challenged. For any generalization, we can find large bodies of literature that seem to refute it. March and Olsen's (1984) characterization of the salient features of post-World War II political science as contextual, reductionist, utilitarian, functionalist, and instrumentalist, however, seems particularly ill-conceived, since it lumps together orientations that in fact were mutually antagonistic rather than mutually complementary.

In particular, I am extremely skeptical that modern political science has "for the most part, described political events as the consequences of calculated decisions," as March and Olsen (1984) claim. I do not read the *American Voter* that way, nor most of the subsequent literature of the "Michigan school." Downsian views may now be de rigueur, but political socialization, party identification, citizen duty, and ideas of that sort are far from dead even today--and certainly were alive and well and the dominant leitmotifs in the study of voter choice for most of the post-W.W.II period.⁽⁵⁾ Similarly, in comparative politics, I would hardly describe leading contributors in the 1960s and 1970s such as Gabriel Almond, Harry Eckstein, or Lucian Pye, say, as rational choice modelers.

I do not wish to try to fight with March and Olsen (1984) about the history of the discipline. Rather, my aim here is to set the record straight in one limited domain by arguing that there were many different revivals of interest in institutions after World War II, all of which have legitimate claims to being called "new institutionalism,"⁽⁶⁾ and by pointing out that at least two of these new institutionalisms, that associated with Bill Riker and his students and colleagues, and that associated with Arend Lijphart and his students and colleagues, simply do not fit into the new institutionalist mold poured by March and Olsen (1984).⁽⁷⁾ It is the Lijphartian strain of new institutionalism, however, that will be the principal focus of this essay.

Arend Lijphart is the author of seminal work on the political consequences of electoral systems and on the logic of constitutional design, whose work on mechanisms for power-sharing has world-wide visibility and an influence that has extended far beyond academic circles (particularly in South Africa). The concern for institutional structure and its effects that underpins almost all of his books and articles entitles Lijphart to a central place among the set of rather diverse folks who identify themselves with the "new institutionalism" in political science. Moreover, when the history of the discipline is written, say in the year 2020, looking back not just at Lijphart's own work but also that of the students and colleagues that he has influenced -- as with Bill Riker and the "Rochester School of positive political theory," or Philip Converse and Warren Miller and the "Michigan School of survey research" -- we⁽⁸⁾ will be able to identify a distinctive methodological stance and set of central questions that future political scientists will

come to label Arend Lijphart and the "UCSD/UCI School(9) of comparative institutional analysis."(10)

Even without the advantages of 20/20 hindsight, there are some things to be said about what I believe will come to be identified as seven common elements of the approach of the UCSD/UCI School of comparative institutional analysis.(11)

- First, there is the cross-national scope of analysis and the emphasis on comparisons.
- Second, there is a blending of concern for taxonomic conceptualization and a concern for measurement, both in the form of a search for plausible operationalizations and in terms of really knowing the data.
- Third, there is an emphasis on the need to identify variables that can be shown to have explanatory power.
- Fourth, there is an absence of dogmatism, i.e., a strong belief that institutions can matter, without a view that they are in any way the whole story.
- Fifth, there is the view that a necessary ingredient in important research is important questions.(12)
- Sixth, there is the belief that institutions are not just constraints on the feasible choice set, or reifications of existing power relationships, they are also often solutions to important societal problems, e.g., to the problem of creating political stability in an ethnically divided society within a democratic framework.
- Seventh, there is a desire to keep things as simple as the reality will allow, and to write to be understood.

While no single one of these features is any way distinctive, the package as a whole is--albeit in a refreshingly commonsensical way.

Moreover, Lijphart's work can be distinguished from the positive political theory approach, with its emphasis on institutions as game-theoretic equilibria and ways of avoiding preference cycling, from that of the sociological approach to organizational theory, with its emphasis on nonsystematic and unanticipated consequences of organizational choice and/or insistence that preferences are shaped by institutions as well as shaping them, and from the narrative historical approach, with its emphasis on institutions as organic growths whose understanding requires "thick description." Lijphart's work also may be contrasted with authors who focus so tightly on formal rules and constitutional jurisprudence as to exhibit relative disregard for empirical evidence about the extent to which rules do matter.

Lijphartian Perspectives on Comparative Institutional Analysis

Emphasis on cross-national analysis

Although necessarily relying heavily on secondary sources and aggregate data, a single scholar with great knowledge and theoretical insights of his/her own can produce important work, even when trying to understand more than one polity. But authors who fall prey to misunderstandings of local political realities or lack a rich theoretical framework with which to organize their data all too often produce comparative work that is pedestrian at best or misleading at worst. In like manner, although examining only a single case, a scholar of perception can make of that case a fount of insight and even a direct test of theory (Eckstein, 1975, 1992), or do work that is so

dragged down by detail and proper names that its theoretical usefulness is zilch. There is a Scylla of theoretical elegance but empirical irrelevance and a Charybdis of atheoretical hyperfactualism, each of which must be avoided. Lijphart's own work (e.g., Lijphart 1977a, 1984, 1994) exhibits exactly that remarkable feat of steersmanship. Perhaps Lijphart's greatest gift is his ability to integrate vast masses of cross-national data (especially aggregate data) into a theoretically meaningful whole, as shown in Lijphart (1984) and Lijphart (1992).

Conceptualization and measurement

Without variables (both dependent and independent) to consider, generalizations are impossible and we are lost in a forest of facts. But, concern for taxonomy and conceptualization, like concern for mathematical modeling, can easily degenerate into scholasticism of the worst sort if it becomes divorced from the development of testable theory and the continual cross-check of empirical validation. To do analysis (especially cross-national analysis) well one must be able to find the forest, without losing sight of the trees. Before one can begin to explain, it is necessary to classify.

The two conceptual frameworks with which Arend Lijphart is most closely identified are the approach to consociationalism found in his early work using the Netherlands as a prime exemplar and the polarity between majoritarian (Westminster) and consensual forms of governance laid out in *Democracies*. Neither of these ideas sprang de novo from Arend's brow, but in each case he provided something significantly new (e.g., the specification of four criteria used to determine the presence of consociationalism, in the case of the former, and the empirically grounded linking of seemingly different institutional arrangements into a common continuum, in the case of the latter).

Concern for explanatory power

If we look at the work of students of comparative politics such as Gary Cox who fully integrate formal modeling and hypothesis testing, it becomes impossible to draw hard and fast contrasts between Lijphart's approach and those of scholars like Cox associated with positive political theory. The differences are primarily ones of emphasis and preferred techniques of analysis. Still, not all those in the positive theory camp of institutionalist analysis are like Cox; some sometimes act as if mathematical theorems are what social science is all about. In contrast, Lijphart and his students are constantly seeking to develop testable theory and are eager to examine data in the process.

If we compare Lijphart's work with those who study institutions from a more traditional historical perspective (see e.g., various of the essays in Steinmo, Thelen and Longstreth, 1992), again we would not wish to draw too sharp a line of difference. In particular, Lijphart is a highly knowledgeable observer, whose research has often included considerable historical background. Moreover, even when working with highly aggregated data at the cross-national data, he is often able to bring to that data the expertise of a country specialist. It is only with respect to extreme points of view that contrasts stand out. A few of those doing narrative history of institutions, with an emphasis on institutions as organic growths, have so stressed the importance of detailed historical explanations and the quiddity of cases as to leave doubt about the possibility of meaningful generalization. In my own view, Lijphart's work puts the lie to any claim that each

polity (or each institution) is so unique and so in need of "thick description" that there is little to be learned from comparative analysis.(14)

Non-dogmatism

In general, Lijphart's view of the explanatory power of institutions is certainly more positive than what we get from, say, March and Cohen's "garbage can" model of organizational theory, with its emphasis on nonsystematic and unanticipated consequences of organizational choice. Nonetheless, in the debate about institutions as strong forces or paper tigers (Koelble, 1995), Lijphart tends to be both pragmatic and "from Missouri," i.e., for him the proof is in the empirical evidence -- that institution x has been shown to be important in context r does not prove that institution y will be found to be important in context s. Moreover, like the mountains, even the strongest institutions may crumble (or tumble) with time.

Lijphart's work on institutions is also far less dogmatic than that of the really hard-core rational choice modelers with respect to methodology. First, the latter often write as though formal models are the only way to derive insights into social phenomena. Some of Lijphart's colleagues (Taagepera and myself, for example) sometimes/often make use of mathematical modeling, but others do not. Second, unlike some of the game theory folks who appear obsessed with the idea of equilibrium, Lijphart is willing to recognize the possibility of institutional flux. Third, while Lijphart certainly looks at the role of individual actors and especially that of entities such as political parties that can often usefully (for certain purposes at least) be treated as unitary actors, he is far from the kind of radical methodological individualism espoused by some scholars associated with Public Choice.

Concern for important questions

While he has occasionally written on relatively narrow topics, e.g., comparisons of different types of thresholds in PR systems (Lijphart, 1977b), almost all of his work has dealt with questions that are part of a bigger picture, e.g., having to do with the roots of stability in multi-ethnic polities, or the fundamental institutional choices that affect the inclusiveness, responsiveness, and durability of political regimes .

Institutions as objects of choice chosen to solve problems and determinants of outputs As suggested above, if we wish to generalize, we must have both dependent and independent variables. Institutions may be thought of as mid-level entities; sometimes used to explain and sometimes themselves in need of explanation (e.g., as to origins and continued existence).(15) Lijphart's work has used institutions in both ways.(16) On the one hand, Lijphart has treated institutions as, in part at least, solutions to problems (e.g., the problem of religious or ethnic conflict in a "divided" society),(17) and thus institutional choice and institutional maintenance can be linked to the nature and importance of the problem being solved. On the other hand, Lijphart has also viewed institutions primarily as constraints on outcomes, as in his work on the effects of electoral system on party proliferation and on political inclusion,(18) and, in his most recent work, he has begun to look more closely at the policy consequences of various types of institutional choices.(19)

My own ideas on how to think about comparative institutional explanations have been very much influenced by Lijphart's work, although my perspective also reflects the early work of David Easton,(20) as well as my commitment to what I have called "reasonable choice

theory."(21) The first four columns in Table 1 may be thought of as factors that affect/condition societal institutional preferences (however, I would emphasize that the causality may also go in the other direction, as well), the next four columns refer to important institutional features (especially those signaled out for special attention by Lijphart, 1984), and the last two columns identify various types of outcomes/outputs that can be directly or indirectly linked to governmental decision-making.(22)

This table is set up to reflect what I view as the "intermediate" role of institutions in comparative analysis.(23) The two sets of items in the table that have a border around them correspond to the two dimensions in the factor-analytic dimensional analysis in the last chapter in Lijphart (1984). The number in parentheses refer to the various categories of institutional arrangements discussed in Lijphart (1984).

Writing to be understood

Unlike some rational choice modelers who eschew English language explanations of their results and seem to think that if its not obscure it can't be profound, and unlike the "if it's incomprehensible in translation it must be awesome in the original" worshipers of what my colleague, A Wuffle,(24) refers to "pre-post-erous obscurantism," Lijphart writes clearly, and presents his data (and the tests of hypotheses) in the simplest and most direct form that he can.

Critiques and Extensions of Lijphart's Majoritarian vs. Consensus Continuum

In this section of the paper I will focus on one of the two conceptual frameworks for which Lijphart is best known: that between majoritarian (Westminster) and consensus-oriented forms of governance.

First, drawing on what Arend, himself, says in the concluding chapter of *Democracies* (and anticipating what Arend, will be saying in the next edition of *Democracies*), I will suggest that the nine variables he singles out for special attention in *Democracies* do not really give rise to a single continuum, but appear, empirically, rather, as constituents of three different dimensions of institutional choice.

Second, rather than thinking about social institutions as naturally either falling into one of the two polar ends of the majoritarian-consensus continuum, it is useful to consider deviations from the pure majoritarian or pure consensus model as being deliberate attempts to reach a particular tradeoff between two competing goals: the ability of governments to reach decisions and the avoidance of negative consequences of those decisions for some members of a society. This leads me to contrast the approach to governmental institutions taken in *Democracies* with the approach to constitutional design taken in Buchanan and Tullock's equally classic (and much older) *The Calculus of Consent: The Logic of Constitutional Design*.

Third, again following Arend's own recent lead (Lijphart, personal communication, 1995), and that of John Stuart Mill as interpreted by Duff Spafford (1985), and picking up on a similar argument in Buchanan and Tullock (1962), I will argue that PR is a more truly majoritarian institution than plurality. To support such a seemingly implausible claim, it is necessary to distinguish the rules used to assure the inclusiveness of representative institutions with the nature of the rules used for legislative decision-making as to policy outputs.

Finally, I wish to elaborate further on ideas of institutions as solutions to problems, by briefly considering some additional types of political problems that institutions might be needed to cope with in addition to inclusiveness, responsiveness, or stability.

Multiple dimensions of institutional choice re governance

In *Democracies* in Chapter 1 (and again in Chapter 13) Lijphart identifies nine key variables. While the discussion in the early part of *Democracies* seems to suggest that all nine fall into a single governance dimension, which can be labeled "majoritarian (Westminster) vs. consensus," the more detailed analysis in Chapter 13 (see Table 13.1) shows that there is really at least one more distinct dimension. The "majoritarian vs. consensus" dimension is associated with five of these nine variables, and a "federalism vs. unitary" dimension is made up of three of the four remaining variables.⁽²⁵⁾ Moreover, when I replicated Lijphart's factor analysis (see Table 13.1 in Lijphart, 1984), the remaining single variable, use of direct elections, does not fit with either of the first two dimensions. What we find is that this last variable defines a "direct versus indirect democracy" dimension which is essentially orthogonal to the first two. Thus, empirically, there are really three different sets of governmental design questions, not just one.

Table 1 is an inventory of types of variables that may be useful in macro-level cross-national research.⁽²⁶⁾ The three different clusters of institutional choice variables that we have identified from *Democracies* are each captured by the black borders around various groups of cells in the middle four columns of Table 1, with the numbering attached to the variables matched to that found in Chapter 13 of *Democracies*.⁽²⁷⁾

As shown in Table 1, Lijphart's analysis finds three distinct questions of institutional choice:

- (1) "How much consensualism?" ⁽²⁸⁾
- (2) "How much regionalism?"
- (3) "How much direct democracy?"

These three questions (especially the first two) are likely to be more clearly distinguished in the next edition of *Democracies* (Arend Lijphart, personal communication, February 1996).

To these three questions I would add three more questions which I believe are equally important for the structuring of political institutions:⁽²⁹⁾

(4) Shall the legislative and the judicial powers be separated; in particular shall there be one or more courts that can override legislative decisions in the name of the fundamental constitutional order.⁽³⁰⁾

(5) What is the nature of citizenship; in particular, can citizenship be acquired or is it only by descent? ⁽³¹⁾

(6) Are the laws set up to operate solely on individuals qua individuals or (also) to distinguish among individuals on the basis of their membership in particular segmented groups.⁽³²⁾

| POLITICAL CULTURE | SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE | SOCIALIZATION MECHANISMS | PUBLIC OPINION | CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS | ELECTORAL SYSTEM | PARTY SYSTEM | REGIME/ GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE | DIRECT GOVT OUTPUT | INDIRECT GOVT OUTPUTS | EMBEDDED IN GLOBAL SYSTEM |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|---|--|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| participant vs. alliegent vs. apathetic culture | racial heterogeneity | structure of media/ media ownership | ideological structure of public opinion | fused powers/ cabinet or executive dominance vs. separation of powers (L2) | basic electoral system type (majoritarian vs. proportional) (L6a) | effective number of parties in the legislature (or electorate) (L4) | majority/ near majority cabinets vs. power sharing vs. minority governments (L1) | taxes (amount/ share of GDP) | growth in GDP | treaty obligations |
| moralistic vs. traditional vs. individualist vs. fatalistic culture | religious heterogeneity | media consumption patterns in the electorate | stability of public opinion | provisions for licial review | mean district magnitude | # of issue cleavage dimensions underpinning the party system (one dimensional vs. multi) (L5) | proportionality of votes to seats conversion (L6b) | taxes (type) | employment | participation in international organizations |
| guilt vs. shame culture | ethnic heterogeneity | structure of education | intensity of public opinion on key issues | written vs.unwritten constitution (L8a) | features such as representation threshold, tiering, bonus seats | nature of partisan affiliations (e.g., formal party membership) | low vs. high cabinet duration | spending (amount/ share of GDP) | inflation | imports as share of GDP |
| shared sense of past vs. divisive sense of past | membership in groups such as unions | role of the family and of intermediating groups | | supermajorities require to amend constitution/ minority veto (L8b) | party centered vs. candidate centered electoral rules | turnout | degree of corporatism | spending (type) | income inequality | exports as share of GDP |
| | class and occupational share of pop. engaged in agriculture | | | unitary vs. federal arrangements (L7) | provisions affecting voting (registration requirements, compulsory voting, weekend voting) | social and interest group base of cleavage structure underpinning the party system | degree of consociationalism | deficits/ surpluses in government accounts | longevity | balance of trade |
| | foreign born share of citizen population | | | (balanced) bicameral vs. unicameral legislature (L3) | campaign finance rules (e.g., matching funds, campaign spending limits) | embedding of party organization in social life (e.g. party bowling leagues, insurance plans) | ideological/ ethnic/sectional makeup of governing party(ies) | national debt | infant mortality | rates share of GDP devoted to foreign aid |
| | age distribution | | | provisions for direct democracy (L9) | | strength of party organizations | | prime lending rate | worker safety | foreign tourists who visit |
| | population density | | | bill of rights with negative liberties | | centralization of party organizations | | interest rate on government securities | demonstrations / riots/work stoppages | capital investment abroad |
| | proportion urban | | | bill of rights with positive liberties | | party factionalism | | | crime rate | commitment of troops abroad |
| | | | | special treatment constitutionally mandated for certain ethnic/ religious groups | | vote share and seat share volatility/degree of party loyalty | | | | foreign investment in the domestic economy |
| | | | | option to become naturalized citizen is available | | reelection rate of incumbents | | | | |

Table 1. Typology of Variables for Comparative Research

Comparisons with Buchanan and Tullock

The Calculus of Consent is rich in ideas about institutional design, but despite the fame of the book, a number of these ideas have largely been lost sight of in subsequent research. In my discussion I draw primarily on chapters 15-17 in *Calculus*, in my view the most neglected section of the book. [\(33\)](#)

Buchanan and Tullock identify four basic features of the rules under which representation takes place. Let N be the total number of voters; let n be the number of voters in a given constituency; let k ($= N/n$) be the size of the legislature. For convenience we let N , n , and k be odd.

X1, *the degree of agreement required to elect a representative*, generally ranging from plurality to n/n (unanimity). [\(34\)](#)

X2, *the degree of randomness in the specification of the constituencies from which representatives are to be chosen*, ranging from maximally homogeneous constituencies (e.g., a "functional" form of representation such as election from within occupational groupings, as the late Senator Paul Douglas once proposed in the 1920s) to a purely random assignment process.

X3, *the degree of democracy*, ranging from $1/N$ (dictatorship) to N/N (direct democracy).

X4, *the decision rule for internal legislative decision-making*, ranging from $1/k$ to k/k (unanimity). [\(35\)](#)

For Buchanan and Tullock, the anticipated consequence of a given mode of representation on the magnitude of the sum of "external costs" plus "decision-making costs" is what determines an individual's preferences among alternative forms of representation, where external costs are the costs imposed on the individual by having choices made that affect him negatively, and decision costs are the costs imposed (transaction costs, perhaps also side-payments) as part of the process of reaching agreement. Each of these variables can be thought of in terms of its consequences for these two types of costs. For example, if we look at X2, as we move toward unanimity then we raise transaction costs and lower external costs. Similarly, if we have more than one parliamentary chamber, each with different modes of selection, then we increase the heterogeneity of the selection process and increase decision costs if the agreement of the two chambers is needed to pass legislation, while at the same time lowering external costs by making changes from the status quo less likely. [\(36\)](#)

For Buchanan and Tullock, the optimal set of rules is simply that in which the sum of "external costs" plus "decision-making costs" is minimized. Because choices that lower one of these two forms of cost tend to raise the other kind, Buchanan and Tullock emphasize tradeoffs between the two kinds of costs and complementarity across these variables, i.e., we need to look at the costs consequences of each choice in the context of the full institutional specification, that is, we need to look at "partial derivatives." Hence, the costs and benefits of a particular institutional choice can only be properly weighed in the light of the total institutional package. [\(37\)](#) Another potentially important implication of the Buchanan and Tullock approach is that it suggests "extreme solutions" (i.e., those in which all institutions are "of a piece" in terms of

which type of costs they are most concerned with minimizing) are probably unlikely to be minimizing of total cost (and thus optimal from the Buchanan and Tullock perspective) in that the gains to be achieved by bringing down one type of cost are likely to be paid for by raising the other type of cost to a very high level. Thus, "hybrid" sets of institutions may well prove more desirable than ones whose motivation is singularly in terms of minimizing one of the two types of institutional costs.

Two kinds of majoritarianism

If we wish to assure that the majority will of the electorate will be reflected in the choices made by the legislature in its name, then we want the set of legislators to be representative of that electorate, since a majority vote of an unrepresentative group is unlikely to be faithfully representative of the broader polity.⁽³⁸⁾ As numerous authors have pointed out, even with fairly apportioned constituencies, plurality-based elections have the potential for a minority of voters to elect a majority of representatives. Assuming fairly apportioned districts, this is virtually impossible under PR. For example, Buchanan and Tullock (1962: 222) say about PR systems that "(a)ll voters, not just the majority of each constituency, are represented in the legislature. Consequently, a majority of the legislature represents a majority of the voters, not just 1/4+ as may be the case in a logrolling or party coalition when the members are elected from single-member constituencies."⁽³⁹⁾ Thus, PR for legislative elections, coupled with majority rule decisions in the legislature arguably give rise to outcomes that are more faithfully majoritarian in nature than does the combination of plurality (or majority) for legislative elections and majority rule in legislative voting.

Inclusiveness, as fostered by PR, which is fully compatible with majoritarian decision-making about governmental policies, should not be confused with non-majoritarian procedures such as power-sharing or legislative supramajoritarian requirements, or arrangements that permit certain groups to veto decisions affecting their fundamental interests (a la Calhoun), or rules/norms that require proportional division of most governmental outputs among members of some set of cognizable groups (a la Lani Guinier (1994)) and some versions of consociationalism), even if, as a matter of observation, such arrangements are much more likely to be found together with PR than with first-past-the-post legislative elections. This is an important point which is often blurred or misunderstood by writers discussing the plurality versus proportionality debate.

Institutions as Problem-solvers: Athenian, Madisonian, Downsian and Lijphartian Perspectives

There are, in my view, important parallels between Lijphart and the tradition of Madison, Hamilton, and Jay.⁽⁴⁰⁾ In the Federalist, we see the notion that institutions can be the solutions to important problems: e.g., harnessing self-interest, preventing factionalism, assuring that choices reflect long-term perspectives that resist the passions of the moment.⁽⁴¹⁾ So, too, with Lijphart. Like the Federalist's assertion of the importance of political institutions and the notion that political institutions can be viewed as matters of explicit choices and tradeoffs, Lijphart treats institutions as rules of the game whose partly predictable consequences may contribute to the solving of important societal problems, e.g., facilitating political stability within a democratic framework in an ethnically divided society.⁽⁴²⁾

Democratic theorists/reformers of an institutionalist bent can usefully be distinguished in terms of the problems they see institutions as being needed to solve. **Table 2** is my very preliminary attempt to distinguish in these terms three important institutionalist traditions concerned with the design of democratic institutions: that of the framers of Athenian democracy, that of James Madison, the principal author of the Federalist Papers, and that of Anthony Downs. I identify seven needs to be met: to assure popular sovereignty, to prevent the rise of tyranny, to improve the competence of decision-making, to prevent corruption, to foster participation, to protect liberty, to strengthen the power of the polity to act collectively; and I match these problems with institutional solutions offered by these different schools.⁽⁴³⁾ This list in **Table 2** is not exhaustive either in terms of problems or in terms of solutions, nor is it meant to be. In particular, it omits a central concern of Lijphart's work, the problem of ethnic accommodation. Similarly, though I discuss Downsian perspectives on institutional design, Table 2 neglects the views of important democratic theorists of the Public Choice School such as James Buchanan, Kenneth Arrow, Gordon Tullock or Mancur Olson, e.g., controlling Leviathan, avoiding cycles, eliciting "honest" preferences about public goods from voters (the literature on demand revelation), or minimizing free riding.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Other recent work in positive political theory has dealt with other important types of problems that institutions might be used to solve, e.g., how to design electoral rules to inhibit political corruption (Myerson, 1993). An important implicit point in Table 2 (shown by the blank spaces in the table) is that different institutional theorists focus on different questions.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Table 2 Institutions as Problem-Solving Devices: Comparisons of Athenian, Madisonian and Downsian Perspectives

| | ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY | MADISONIAN DEMOCRACY | DOWNSIAN DEMOCRACY |
|--|--|--|--|
| TO ASSURE POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY | Universal male citizen suffrage; Selection of assembly, council, juries and most other offices by lot from the entire age-qualified citizen pool (but wealth requirements for some offices, e.g., Strategos; and women and slaves ineligible to vote.) | Popular election of representatives; Eligibility for office of age-qualified white males. (but race and gender limits on eligibility for suffrage; Initial property requirements for suffrage in many states) | Popular election of representatives; Partisan competition for office (two-party competition intended to lead to centrist politics) |
| TO PREVENT THE RISE OF TYRANNY | Only a plural and largely ceremonial executive; Frequent rotation in office; Use of lottery; Availability of ostracism. | Divided and limited government with complex system of checks and balances; Extended territory; Patents of nobility prohibited; No ex post facto laws; Frequent elections | |
| TO IMPROVE DECISION- MAKING | Public deliberation in assembly and council; Preparation of bills by | Separation of power: Bicameral legislature (whose upper chamber has | |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| | council; Experienced slave deputies to oversee work; Small number of elected officials for vital offices (e.g., that of Strategos) chosen in large part on basis of merit | a longer term of office); Judiciary with life service; Single executive who can act with energy, secrecy, and despatch. | |
| TO IMPROVE ACCOUNTABILITY AND TO PREVENT CORRUPTION | Formal review of background of potential office-holders (Dokimasia); Periodic public scrutiny of accounts (Euthynai); Lawsuits against those who recommend policies that prove unwise or unconstitutional (Graphe Paranoumon); Large juries whose members cannot be predicted in advance of selection | For elected offices, voter ability to deny reelection; (eligibility for reelection intended to spur continued concern for public approbation). For appointed offices, potential for impeachment by legislature | Party platforms; Voter ability to deny reelection to public officials |
| TO FOSTER PARTICIPATION | Civic culture that fosters view of public service as a citizen duty; Payment for office holding | Payment for office holding | |
| TO PROTECT LIBERTY | No lawyers; Short trials; no appeal to precedent; Citizen brought lawsuits with no state prosecutor, but with punishment for frivolous lawsuits; Oaths of office containing explicit limits on official actions (e.g., protection of property rights). | Bill of rights; No bills of attainder; Judicial review; Limitations on scope of governmental activities | |
| TO STRENGTHEN POWER OF THE POLITY TO ACT COLLECTIVELY | . | Ability to tax the people directly; Federal law supreme; (to be enforced by state as well as by federal judges) | |

Lijphart as Teacher and Colleague

Let me conclude this essay with somewhat more personal comments.

Scientists can make their mark both by what they do and by what they inspire others to do. Most scholars succeed at neither; Arend has been one of the few to succeed at both. Here let me praise Arend for the quality of his students. I see Arend's importance in political science in the 1990s and in the next century as parallel to Bill Riker's importance in the 1970s and 1980s:[\(46\)](#) nurturing a cadre of scholars who will continue the style of research of which Arend has been a premier exponent, as will their students after them.[\(47\)](#) Arend has been able to impart to his best students a taste for comparisons, and to inspire a willingness to dig deep to generate the data necessary for them, along with an uncompromising commitment to try to make sense of the world and to try to find answers to questions that matter. His successes inspire in me a strong feeling of envy, as well as one of deep respect.

Lastly, let me note for the record that I first met Arend as a result of my unsuccessful efforts to recruit him to UCI (not long after I arrived there myself, over 16 years ago). Since then, I have had the pleasure of co-editing three books with him, have recently co-taught a graduate course with him, am about to run a conference with him next year (on the historical origins of electoral and party systems in the Nordic countries) that will probably become yet another co-edited book, and continue to nourish the fond hope that, before the century expires, Arend and I will actually co-author (and not merely co-edit) a book together, on the U.S. in comparative perspective. May you all have such luck in finding true collegueship and lifelong friendship with the job candidates you didn't get to hire.

ENDNOTES

An earlier version of this paper was given at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, San Francisco, August 29-September 1, 1996. I am indebted to Dorothy Green for library assistance.

1. Among this latter set are scholars such as James Buchanan, Geoffrey Brennan and Gordon Tullock (Buchanan and Tullock, 1962; Brennan and Buchanan, 1985), Elinor Ostrom (1986), Ken Shepsle (Shepsle, 1979a, 1979b, 1989), Andrew Schotter (1981, 1986), Barry Weingast (Shepsle and Weingast, 1989; Weingast and Marshall, 1988), Oliver Williamson (1981) and Donald Wittman (1985, 1995; see also Grofman and Wittman, 1989), to name but a few. Of the authors working in this tradition, only Downs (1957) and one article by Shepsle and Weingast are found in the March and Olsen (1984) bibliography. However, the contributions of Shepsle and Weingast are not actually discussed in this article, while the discussion of Downs is not in the context of his contributions to new institutionalist thought.

2. Within American politics, in the area of representation, there was also a major revival of interest in institutions that was taking place in the 1970s and 1980s and that continues to the present -- occurring largely or entirely independently of work in positive political theory. Consider, for example, the work on the consequences for racial and gender representation of at-large versus single-member districts (see, e.g., Engstrom and McDonald, 1981, 1982; Heilig and Mundt, 1981; Karnig and Welch, 1979; Grofman, Migalski and Noviello, 1986; Davidson and Grofman, 1994) or on the political consequences of the internal rules of representation within U.S. political parties (see, e.g., Lengle, 1981; Polsby, 1983), or

consider recent interest in reform of electoral institutions such as the movements for direct elections of the president, term limits, or a balanced budget amendment.

3. As Koelble (1995: 231) aptly notes "the study of institutions has been central to political science since its inception.

4. Still, if we wish to claim an historical progenitor for Lijphart's style of research, a plausible candidate is the Aristotle of "The Constitution of Athens," who set his students to collect constitutions and who is the inventor of that most long-lasting of all political conceptualizations, the distinction between aristocratic, oligarchic and democratic forms of government, i.e., rule by the one, the few, or the many. Later in this paper I will also briefly allude to parallels between Lijphart and another early important institutionalist thinker, James Madison.

5. Indeed, Ordeshook (1987: 19-20) suggests that this new [public choice] institutionalism is a response to the implicit determinism of the behaviorists, whose revolution after World War II is seen as response to the nearly atheoretical, descriptive mode of political science then dominant. But that earlier mode focused also on political institutions--the structure of legislatures, electoral rules, constitutional provisions, and the like-- which is a disciplinary emphasis that somehow was lost in the definition, measurement and correlation of social class, partisan identification, attitudes, childhood socialization, norms, socio-economic status, and the like.

6. A similar point about the actual diversity of perspectives all going under the name "new institutionalism" is made in Koelble (1995).

7. As a member in good standing of the California Drive-in Church of the Incurrigibly Eclectic (founded by my colleague, A Wuffle), I do not object to March and Olsen (1984, 1989) espousing a set of disparate (or even contradictory) insights (cf. Walt Whitman, 1885: "Do I contradict myself? Very well, then, I contradict myself. I am large--I contain multitudes.") especially when, as in this case, many of the insights are important ones. I do object to their attributing the new institutionalism they describe to that rather heroic assemblage of strange bedfellows they cite in their bibliography, since no one of the authors they discuss ever advocated all (or even most of) the ideas claimed to be the thrust of the new institutionalism. Furthermore, the connection among the different schools of thought (who do not, by and large, read or cite each other's work) exists only because March and Olsen are themselves catholic in their taste and discerning in their ability to pick out theoretically significant resemblances. As with countries that call themselves "democracies," it is remarkable what disparate activities pass under the rubric of "new institutionalism" (cf. Smith, 1988; Levi, 1987; Powell and diMaggio, 1991; Steinmo and Thelen, 1992; Crawford and Ostrom, 1995; see also review in Koelble, 1995). Indeed, even when we confine ourselves to the political economy literature, the term "new institutionalism" still covers a motley set of disparate perspectives, ranging from, Marxist, historical, and evolutionary ideas (see, e.g., Langlois, 1986b) to the work of the Public Choice school and closely related approaches (see e.g., North, 1981, 1986; Levi, 1988).

8. I am an incorrigible optimist (as well as an incorrigible methodological eclectic).

9. I prefer this label to another narrower label that has already been applied: "the Southern California electoral systems mafia." On the one hand, Lijphart's work is far wider than the study of electoral systems and, on the other hand, a number of Arend's students are no longer in southern California. Also, I have chosen to call it the "UCSD/UCI School" rather than just the "UCSD School" because of the ways my own work and that of Rein Taagepera (see e.g. Taagepera, 1986; Taagepera and Shugart, 1989; Taagepera and Grofman, 1985) have been influenced by Lijphart, and because there are some students we already share in common (esp. Matthew Shugart, who worked with both Rein and Arend, and Andy Reynolds, who worked with both Arend and myself) and others who will come to fall into that category because of the joint UCSD/UCI graduate course "The United States in Comparative Perspective" that Arend and I have started teaching (taught for the first time in Winter 1996). Of course, not all who would identify with the seven points set out below have direct links to Lijphart as student or colleague, for others (e.g., Powell, 1982) the linkage is purely an intellectual one.

10. I have used the term 'institutional' rather than 'constitutional' (which was the term used in the title of an earlier draft of this essay) both because I wish to place Lijphart's work in the context of work that uses

the label "new institutionalism," and because not all important institutional choices are embedded in constitutions, e.g., electoral system choices are often matters of legislative decision. My reasons for adding the adjective "comparative" are obvious to anyone familiar with Lijphart's work.

11. While, in a various of his books and articles Arend Lijphart has laid out his ideas about how to study particular institutions, the central features of his general approach to institutional design and to the study of institutional effects have not, as far as I am aware, ever clearly been fully articulated either by Lijphart or his students

12. In Isaiah Berlin's metaphor, Arend Lijphart has been a hedgehog, not a fox -- there is a unity to virtually all of his work in that certain basic questions about political stability and democratic governance are at the heart of it, along with a relative handful of key variable and key ideas that have been elaborated and extended over the past three decades.

13. In the latter, he is aided by an international team of scholars who collaborated on the data base for the book.

14. I was taught by David Easton that all political analysis is ultimately necessarily comparative, either across Time, across Nations, or across Types (e.g., types of institutional settings). (This point is referred to as the TNT principle by another colleague of mine, A Wuffle (personal communication, April 1, 1992).) Indeed, I would go further. I also believe quite strongly that we can best understand any single case by seeing it in comparative context. Russell Dalton (1996: 4) has made related points in a very elegant way that deserves quoting at length: "Even if we are interested only in a single nation, comparative research is a useful approach. An old Hebrew Riddle expresses this idea: 'Question: Who first discovered water? Answer: I don't know, but it wasn't a fish.' Immersing oneself in a single environment renders the characteristics of the environment unobtrusive and unnoticed. It is difficult to understand what is unique and distinctive about American political behavior by studying only American politics." I would add to Dalton's comments only that it is important not to treat rarity or even uniqueness as synonymous with inexplicability. For example, that some polity's institutions are often found located at an extreme on some set of continua may make it easier rather than harder to make sense of its politics in comparative perspective (e.g. although U.S. turnout is very low by international standards, models predicting national turnout levels fit the U.S. quite well --because U.S. registration rules, electoral institutions and party systems differ from those of other countries in ways that predictably lower turnout; cf Crepaz, 1990). It is our strong and very similar views as to these and related points that led Professor Lijphart and myself to organize a jointly taught course on the U.S. in comparative perspective. See further discussion in Grofman (1996a, 1997a, b, c forthcoming), and, eventually (the fates willing) , to turn that course into a book (Lijphart and Grofman, 2001??).

15. I take this point from discussions with Edwin Winckler. See Grofman (1997a) for further elaboration.

16. This dual view of the role of institutions in explanations argues, in my view, against any attempt to pose a sharp dichotomy between institutionalist and cultural explanations of social phenomena (cf. Koelble, 1995). Culture may shape institutions, but there will usually be an independent effect of institutions even after we hold culture constant. For my own views of the notion of "contextually embedded institutions" see Grofman (1997a, c forthcoming).

17. See e.g., Lijphart (1975, 1977a).

18. See e.g., Lijphart (1977b, 1982, 1992, 1994). See also various of the other essays in the volume edited by Grofman, Lijphart, McKay and Scarrow (1982) and those in the other two volumes co-edited by Lijphart and Grofman: Lijphart and Grofman (1984) and Grofman and Lijphart (1986).

19. Some of this work has been jointly with his former student, Markus Crepaz (e.g., Lijphart and Crepaz, 1991, 1995). See also Crepaz (1992, 1994, 1996).

20. Long before I became David Easton's colleague at UCI, I was his research assistant when we were both still at the University of Chicago. His influence on me is unlikely to wear off.

21. See esp. Grofman (1993a, 1993b, 1997d forthcoming); Wuffle (1992)

22. This table should be very much viewed as a preliminary effort; there is certainly no claim that it identified all of the critical variables in comparative institutional analysis. I should also note that I am

indebted to Russell Dalton for helpful suggestions as to variables to be included in columns 3, 4 and 7 of Table 1.

23. The reader will note that this three-fold classification parallels the early form of Easton's black box model of government (Easton, 1966), with its inputs on the one end and outputs on the other. In Table 1 (many of) what are supposed to be the most internal important elements of that black box are now being specified. For more details on my own approach to comparative institutional analysis, see esp. Grofman (1997a, b, c forthcoming), and the various of my articles that emphasize the importance of natural experiments as a methodological tool (e.g., Niemi, Hill and Grofman, 1985; Grofman, Migalski and Noviello, 1986; Grofman, Griffin, and Glazer, 1990; Grofman and Davidson, 1994; Grofman, Griffin and Berry, 1995).

24. A Wuffle (personal communication, April 1, 1996).

25. See also discussion in Taagepera (1996).

26. This table was developed for my first lecture in the joint course with Arend Lijphart on "The U.S. in Comparative Perspective," taught in Winter 1996. It should be thought of as a work in progress; I make no claims as to its inclusiveness. [See Course Materials.](#)

27. Other aspects of this table are discussed below.

28. Interestingly, as a matter of empirical connectedness the choice of a presidential or parliamentary system, like the choice of an electoral system, is associated with the majoritarian vs. consensual dimension.

29. Space constraints do not permit me to do more than identify these important aspect of the political order.

30. While this fourth question is associated with the presence of a federal dimension as a matter of empirical fact (Lijphart, 1984); there is nothing that constrains it to be so limited. In particular, even if there are not conflicts between competing claims of federal and provincial authorities there can still be competing claims of individual (or group) versus government that need to be resolved and courts are one way to do so.

31. Here, it is sometimes claimed that citizenship by descent is inherently incompatible with democracy. I disagree, but space does not permit me to pursue this issue here. (My views on this matter owe much to discussions about Estonia with my colleague Rein Taagepera.)

32. Questions like the last have been the focus of much of Arend Lijphart's early work (e.g., Lijphart, 1977). The answers to these questions (and related ones like the extent of power sharing and supramajoritarianism) are empirically correlated with the majoritarian versus consensus dimension identified in Lijphart (1984). However, in theory at least, they need not be.

33. Most of these chapters heavily reflect the ideas of Gordon Tullock.

34. Although Buchanan and Tullock suggest this variable can take on values as low as $1/n$, such a value would only seem possible in a society in which not all individuals have votes that count, or in some lottery process.

35. In Grofman (1988) I suggest that four variables not directly considered by Buchanan and Tullock in *Calculus* are especially good candidates for addition to their select list of key representational variables: equality of treatment of voters, committee structure within the legislature, ease of constitutional amendment, and degree of legislator/legislative accountability. In addition, the domain of governmental action, a central concern of the early chapters in *Calculus* in my view, ought, I think, to be explicitly identified as one of the key variables in determining an optimal form of representation.

36. The exact link between the two types of costs and the values of the various variables is far from obvious, and I am far from happy with Buchanan and Tullock's treatment of this question, especially since they emphasize the costs of unfavorable decisions and tend to neglect the potential gains from agreement on mutually beneficial collective action -- but these are matters that must be left to another essay. For my initial thoughts on these and related topics see Grofman (1988).

37. A closely related but more narrowly focused point has been made in the literature on presidentialism, where it has been argued that presidential systems are particularly pernicious in their potential for conflict when coupled with systems that create rival centers of power.

38. cf. Feld and Grofman (1986).

39. The number 'one quarter' comes from imagining that, in first-past-the-post two-party elections, exactly half of the voters in exactly half of the constituencies determine the winning majority coalition in the legislature.

40. Lijphart (1992) contains excerpts from the Federalist Papers .

41. The founding fathers, among the greatest political engineers, were believers in a "new science of politics" (Ranney, 1976). Indeed, according to Daniel Moynihan (1987:22), the fundamental question in the Federalist Papers was not about the merits or demerits of ratification but about political science: "Could a government be founded on scientific principles?"

42. This role of institutions as problem solving devices is neglected if we look at institutions as a set of norms or as a synonym for a set of game-rules, or if we view institutions as primarily naturally evolving entities rather than objects of choice. Quite surprisingly, given Ostrom's own work, the Crawford and Ostrom (1995) essay on institutions slights the problem-solving aspect of what an institution is all about.

43. Albeit not every problem is addressed by the institutions offered by each of these three institutionalist traditions

44. Elsewhere (Grofman, 1989) I have suggested that scholars such as James Buchanan, Gordon Tullock and William Riker could also be regarded as natural heirs of the Madisonian tradition. Riker was of course a leading student of federalism even before he found religion in the form of rational choice, and the appendix in Buchanan and Tullock (1962) makes explicit reference to the Federalist Papers --although few political scientists seem aware of the connection. Other scholars in public choice and positive political theory have also rediscovered the Federalist Papers as a source of inspiration. For example, Hammond and Miller (1987) reexamine bicameralism from the perspective of its contributions to stability. Their analysis is similar in spirit (albeit not in language) to Federalist No. 63, which they cite. Keech (1986) links contemporary rules of political business cycle to arguments about the proper term length for legislators. Points of departure for his essay are Federalist Nos. 52 and 62. Brams (1989) addresses the relative power of the two chambers of Congress, in the context of Federalist Nos. 58 and 63. Other essays in Grofman and Wittman (1989) also explicitly take their point of departure from the Federalist Papers (see also various essays in Grofman, 1996b). Many of the themes of institutional design in contemporary public choice theory can be found in the Federalist Papers, even though the present-day technical jargon may mask the identity .

45. Of course, as suggested in Table 2, a question central to Downs (1957) and the literature that springs from him, how to solve the problem of assuring legislator responsibility to public opinion, is also a central question in many other research traditions. Still the peculiarly Downsian way of framing the problem, where public opinion is treated as tantamount to the views of the median voter, remains distinctive.

46. It is important to acknowledge that , just as other Rochester faculty shared with Riker the training of students such as Ken Shepsle and Peter Ordeshook, especially with respect to methodology, other UCSD faculty (esp. Gary Cox, and more recently Kaare Strom, Matt Shugart, Matt McCubbins, and Arthur ("Skip") Lupia) have also played a key role in training the students who have worked with Arend who are taking a comparative institutionalist approach.

47. See e.g., (Matt) Shugart out of Lijphart/Taagepera (see Taagepera and Shugart, 1986 and numerous Shugart publications thereafter), followed by (John) Carey out of Shugart/Lijphart (see Shugart and Carey, 1992; Carey, 1996) and, most recently, (Andy) Reynolds out of Lijphart/Shugart/Grofman (see Reynolds, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996; Grofman and Reynolds, 1996). Other Lijphart students include Dave Wilsford, Thomas Koelble, and Marcus Crepez.

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