

Centripetalism in Consociational Democracy: The Multiple Proportional Vote¹

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Abstract

Belgium illustrates that using consociational institutions in divided societies may ensure a peaceful political climate, but it does not succeed in reducing the centrifugal tendencies. As ethnic issues threaten to paralyse the political debate, preserving the efficiency of the state will require adding centripetal incentives to the consociational framework thanks to a new electoral system, the Multiple Proportional Vote (MPV). Being able both to maintain the consociational goal of reflecting the different communities in the parliament, and to strengthen centripetal trends in allowing electors of every group to cast their preferences for candidates of the different communities, MPV suggests that consociationalism and its main theoretical alternative, centripetalism, are far from mutually exclusive.

Introduction

Belgium is famous for its beer, its chocolate, and more recently for its two tennis women. Belgium is also famous for its linguistic quarrels. Deeply divided between, mainly, a Dutch-speaking community living in Flanders, the North part of the country, and a French-speaking community living in Wallonia, the South part, Belgium is one of the best examples of strong, but peaceful, rivalry between two ethnic groups.² There is no IRA or ETA in Belgium, no Belgian region looks like Corsica, but the whole political life is paralysed by linguistic matters.³ Belgium is actually a striking illustration of the merits

² I adopt Horowitz's inclusive definition of ethnicity: "[Ethnic] groups are defined by ascriptive differences, whether the indicium of group identity is color, appearance, language, religion, some other indicator of common origin, or some combination thereof" (HOROWITZ 1985: 17-18).

³ For a quick presentation of Belgian institution evolution, see VAN PARIJS 2000 or HEISLER 1990.

and limits of a model of political organisation, the consociational model that its main advocate, Arend Lijphard, has considered to be “the only workable type of democracy in deeply divided societies” (LIJPHART 1994b: 222).

Indeed, the Belgian case illustrates that while the consociational model may effectively succeed in maintaining a peaceful and stable political climate, it is not able to prevent the augmentation of centrifugal tendencies. As Dryzek (2003) suggests, the main characteristic of consociational democracy is analgesia: consociationalism is an efficient means of accommodation making affordable the ethnic division, but, by confining deliberation within each group, it risks succumbing to Sunstein’s law of group polarisation (SUNSTEIN 2002): a debate within a group leads the group position to become more extreme since the members’ assessments and prejudices are strengthened as they discuss with like-minded others.⁴

In regard to the limits of the consociational model, some political theorists, such as Horowitz (1985; 1991; 1997) and Reilly (2001), have developed an alternative institutional account for divided societies: the centripetal approach. Instead of organising elite power-sharing, the centripetal approach aims to promote cooperation between the different groups in using an electoral system that encourages political representatives to find support outside of their own ethnic communities.

After a sketch of what is at stake in the controversy between consociationalists and centripetalists, the core of the present paper will consist in defending a new electoral system (or at least a new variation of the List-Pr system), the multiple proportional vote (MPV). This electoral system is able both to maintain the consociational goal of reflecting the different communities in the parliament and to strengthen centripetal trends in allowing electors of every group to cast their preferences for candidates of the different communities. In the last section, I will give some quick indication of the contexts into which MPV is suitable.

⁴ It is striking, for example, to see the way that the former first Flemish political party, the CD&V, has evolved, since it was sent to the opposition in 1999. In order to recover the voters that it lost, this Christian democrat party has adopted an almost nationalistic discourse requiring notably the regionalisation of the social security, of the justice, and of the police.

Consociationalism and Centripetalism

Consociationalism emphasises the need for divided societies to develop mechanisms for elite power-sharing if democracy is to survive. These are encapsulated in four key features: grand coalition governments in which all significant groups are represented; proportional representation of different groups in the distribution of legislative seats and in the civil service; segmental autonomy via federalism or similar devices; and a power of veto over key decisions by minority groups. (REILLY 2001: 20)

Consociationalism guarantees that each ethnic group would share political power and constrains the elite of those different groups to govern together. Consociationalism is therefore a powerful means for protecting minorities and for imposing accommodation at the political level. However, consociationalism suffers of schizophrenia: if consociation compels political elites to find a compromise between the demands of ethnic groups, it does not give group leaders any incentive to adopt a moderate discourse on ethnic questions. On the contrary, in order to obtain the support of their electorate, leaders must adopt an aggressive attitude. Consequently, “[t]he centrifugal competition for group allegiance is an enormous constraint on compromise across group lines, and it renders the grand coalition, under conditions of free elections, a contradiction in terms.” (HOROWITZ 2002: 21)

Therefore, Horowitz (1997: 23) pleads for reducing ethnic conflict in divided societies by using internal incentives rather than external constraints. Instead of imposing seat pooling on group leaders, accommodation in divided societies would be most successfully fostered by promoting political candidates to find support in communities other than one’s own. According to him, in a divided society, using preferential voting systems, which requires that voters do not vote only for their favoured candidate but rank candidates in the order of their preferences⁵, should provide some strong incentives to political candidates to use moderation on inter-ethnic issues, because gaining a sufficient number of votes will require convincing voters from other communities to cast their second or third preferences in their favour (which they will do only for a candidate who can prove his sympathy for their claims). Whereas seat pooling, as in a consociation, entails the formation of post-election coalitions to secure a legislative majority without

giving to such a coalition support in the electorate, vote pooling works at the voter level and favours centripetal tendencies against ethnic extremism.

Consociationalism recognises formally the ethnic division and reproduces that division at all power levels, whereas the centripetal approach aims to encourage moderation on ethnic issues and, thereby, favours more ideological cleavages. Roughly, the main issue is therefore whether having communal representatives is desirable or if it is preferable that politicians represent the whole nation.

Whereas communal representation may crystallise the ethnic conflict, the obvious danger of the second possibility is its naivety: even if a candidate is elected by votes from different groups, she will stay primarily a representative of her community. Moreover, centripetalism overlooks the fact that, in some contexts, ethnic groups may want their specificity to be formally recognised in institutions. Those groups could resent suppressing communal seats as a negation of their identity. Formal acknowledgement of ethnic differences is very often the first condition for accommodation.

Furthermore, in some countries and notably in Belgium, there is another decisive argument for ruling out preferential voting systems. As Horowitz has stated (1997: 35-37), the vote pooling strategy requires heterogeneous constituencies, so that candidates cannot be sure to win an election on the vote of their own group alone. While the two main linguistic groups live in two different parts of the country, it is almost impossible to draw constituencies that would be both coherent and sufficiently heterogeneous. Centripetalist objectives must then be realised while using other institutional arrangements than preferential voting systems.⁶

Therefore, it is difficult to find an attractive alternative to consociationalism, especially for parliamentary elections, whenever electoral districts are inevitably homogeneous and where there is a strong will of the different linguistic communities to

⁵ The two main preferential voting systems are the Alternative Vote and the Single Transferable Vote. For an excellent presentation of, notably, these two systems, see REYNOLDS & REILLY 1997.

⁶ For instance, Centripetalists may use a 'constituency pooling' strategy, which requires that a candidate may be elected only if he succeeds to collect votes in several constituencies. This way, even if each constituency is homogeneous, the candidate must obtain support from more than one ethnic group (BOGAARDS 2003). Actually, constituency pooling is less an alternative strategy to consociationalism or centripetalism than a specific arrangement which may be used with majoritarian electoral systems as with proportional ones. In a way, MPV is precisely a combination of a constituency pooling strategy and a list-Pr system.

be institutionally recognised. In such cases, the challenge is then to determine how we could escape the schizophrenia of consociationalism in using an electoral system that favours centripetalism.

A Centripetal Consociationalism: the MPV Electoral System

For that challenge to succeed, we need an electoral system able to include the positive aspects of both consociationalism and centripetalism while curtailing their flaws (ARMS 1997: 128). That is exactly what the Multiple Proportional Vote (MPV) aims to do.

MPV is best defined by the three following features:

- (1) The representatives of the different communities included in the society are elected separately by using a List-PR electoral system⁷.
- (2) Those representatives are elected not only by the voters of their own group, but also by the voters of every other group included in the society.
- (3) The value of the total of all internal votes (that means votes from a member of a specific community in favour of a candidate or a party of her own community) is higher than the value of the total of all external votes (that means votes from a member of a specific community in favour of a candidate or a party of another community).

Proposition (1) entails that there are separate elections for the representatives of each ethnic group. In this way, ethnic diversity is explicitly acknowledged in institutions. It also means candidates will compete only against candidates from their own community. This may increase intra-ethnic conflicts and foster non-ethnic cleavages, such as economic and social differences: the more salient intra-ethnic conflicts become, the weaker the ethnic cohesion will be (HOROWITZ 1997: 23-24). Therefore, the electoral competition between candidates of the same community may facilitate inter-ethnic accommodation.⁸

Using a proportional system, such as List-PR, reinforces this phenomenon. A proportional system allows the multiplication of political parties and so the expression of

⁷ List-PR requires multi-member districts and that each party presents a list of candidates. Seats are distributed among parties in regard to their overall share of the vote.

a broader diversity of cleavages (LIJPHART 1994). Furthermore, multipartism makes easier the formation of cross-ethnic coalitions after elections in forging links across ethnic boundaries between political parties defending similar policies on non-ethnic questions. In Belgium for instance, a classical coalition includes the first party of each linguistic community and their respective twin parties.

Despite political representatives of each group being elected separately, proposition (2) introduces centripetal tendencies into the consociational framework. If MPV keeps the classical feature of consociationalism, which prescribes that candidates compete only against candidates from the same group, it suppresses the main reason for centrifugal tendencies in consociational institutions by asking voters from all communities to elect political representatives. Since candidates may obtain support from voters who do not belong to their own ethnic group and are accountable to the whole nation, they have a strong incentive to be moderate on ethnic questions in their electoral discourses as, in order to be re-elected, in their behaviour after elections.

From the point of view of the voter, that means he receives as many ballots as there are ethnic groups in the society. He votes separately for the election of representatives of each community. Consequently, MPV is more sustainable in societies including a low number of ethnic groups because otherwise its implementation can lead to dissuading practical difficulties.

It is proposition (3) that makes MPV an original electoral system rather than the juxtaposition of several List-PR elections in one nation-wide district, which would risk leading to unfair consequences. For the sake of simplicity, consider the clearest case where there are only two main ethnic groups. If one organises two List-PR elections to elect the representatives of each community in giving the same value to every vote, this would mean that political representatives from both groups would be chosen by a majority of voters of the largest community. Political representatives of the smallest group would cease to be by priority the representatives of their own group. In contrast, MPV gives only a limited weight to external votes in order to guarantee that elected candidates express the voice of their own community. MPV does not aim to allow

⁸ See the last section for a discussion when intra-ethnic competition fosters accommodation rather than ethnic radicalisation.

members of another group to choose some of the representatives of a group, but its goal is to foster representatives of each group to adopt an attitude of collaboration instead of competition. Rather than trying to defend the interests of their own group without taking into consideration the implications for other groups, representatives should express at the federal level the point of view of their own community in order to define the common good in collaboration with the representatives of other communities.

Consequently, deciding that a low percentage of seats reserved for candidates of one specific group will be assigned by voters of the other group is not a way of implementing MPV. External votes should support candidates and parties who are considered legitimate representatives by their own group. Therefore, MPV requires that all seats be assigned in counting the total of all internal votes for a coefficient C of the result and the total of all external votes for the complementary coefficient (with $C > 0.5$).⁹ This means that the electoral result of party X for the election of representatives of community A is obtained by the following formula:

$$(4) \quad R_a, P_X = B^a/V^a * C_a + B^b/V^b * (1 - C_a) \quad (0.5 < C \leq 1)$$

with:

- R_a = electoral result in percentage for the election of representatives of community A
- P_X = party X
- B^a = total number of internal ballots expressed in favour of P_X
- V^a = total number of valid internal votes
- C_a = coefficient defining the weight assigned to the total of all internal votes
- B^b = total number of external ballots expressed in favour of P_X
- V^b = total number of valid external votes

This formula gives the score of party X in percentage. It consists in adding the percentage of votes obtained by this party in its own group, multiplied by the coefficient

defining the weight of internal votes, to the percentage of votes obtained by this party in the other group, multiplied by the complementary coefficient defining the weight of external votes.

The individual electoral power, i.e. the part of seats dependent on a single individual, is given by the sum of the electoral power of his internal ballot and the electoral power of his external ballot. The electoral power of each of these ballots is obtained by dividing the number of seats reserved for the respective election, multiplied by the corresponding coefficient, by the number of valid ballots expressed by members of that individual's community:

$$(5) \quad I^a = S_a/V^a * C_a + S_b/V^a * (1 - C_b) \quad (0.5 < C \leq 1)$$

with: I^a = individual electoral power of a voter of community A
 S_a = number of seats reserved for candidates of community A

The Coefficient C

The core of MPV lies hence in the coefficient C and the complementary coefficient $1 - C$, which determine the weight of the two kinds of vote. $1 - C$ works as a coefficient of centripetalism: when C is lower, incentives will be greater for representatives to be moderate on ethnic issues and to take into consideration the interests of the other group. Inversely, when C is higher, centrifugal tendencies will be stronger. The extreme case, where C is 1, corresponds to the election of representatives of one group by only members of that group, which characterises classical consociational arrangements. Therefore, the precise value given to C depends on the political will of either encouraging social cohesion or acknowledging the polarisation of the society.

However, while determining the value of C , some principles should be kept in mind. In conjunction with the obvious necessity of giving to C a value over 0.5 for ensuring that the representatives remain mainly chosen by members of their own group, it is desirable to respect the three following principles:

⁹ To avoid indirectly falling back into a system where some seats reserved for a community are filled by candidates chosen only by electors of another community, a supplementary requirement must be added in order to forbid some candidates from being elected only thanks to external votes. See below.

(6) Intra-individual Equality:

$$I^a = I^b$$

(7) Proportionality between Seats and Voters in Each Community:

$$S_a/V^a = S_b/V^b$$

(8) Equal External Communal Influence:

$$C_a = C_b$$

Unfortunately, these three propositions are compatible only if $C_a = C_b = 1$ or $V^a = V^b$. Worse still, the former condition entails giving no value at all to external votes. That means renouncing MPV and organising two PR-List elections where the representatives are elected only by members of their own groups, that is to say, the current system in Belgium. The latter condition corresponds to the fortunate case where both groups are evenly broad. Therefore, using MPV in more common cases implies relaxing one of these three propositions. A closer look at their respective merits is thus indispensable.

Proposition (6) is in no way controversial, since it is merely the democratic requirement “one person, one value”. Nonetheless, there may be times when diverging from this principle in order to protect minorities is justified. Proposition (7) requires that the number of seats reserved for each group to be proportional to the number of voters belonging to that group. This principle¹⁰ is also very commonly accepted, but over-representation of minorities may be considered desirable in some cases. The main alternative, used for example in the U.S. Senate, is an even representation of every group or State, regardless of its size. In contrast, proposition (8) is a principle specific to MPV. It requires that both groups have the same influence on each other. If this principle is not respected, the representatives of the first group will have to be more moderate on ethnic issues than the representatives of the other group. In fact, as we will see, it is the representatives of the smallest community who will need to take more account of the

¹⁰ Or a small variation of this principle, such as proportionality between seats and inhabitants, which also takes into account children. In this paper, there is no utility to distinguish proposition (6) and its variations.

interests of members of the largest group. That implication may be justified by arguing that it is merely a consequence of the democratic principle “one person, one value”. Furthermore, a complementary contextual justification of this asymmetry may be advocated when the centrifugal tendencies are stronger in the minority than in the majority.

Thus relaxing any of these principles seems possible. If, first, one tries to relax proposition (6), then, since (7) implies:

$$(9) \quad S_b/V^a < S_a/V^b \quad (V^a > V^b)$$

propositions (5), (8) and (9) mean that every member of the minority would have more political power than every member of the majority. Indeed, for the same percentage C , the smallest community would designate the largest number of seats, whereas the largest community would exercise its influence on the smallest number of seats. If this form of protection of minorities is deemed unfair, one of the two other propositions must be relaxed instead of proposition (6) in order to correct the under-representation of the majority.

If the requirement of proportionality between seats and voters is relaxed, then propositions (6) and (8) are respected only if:

$$(10) \quad C_a (S_a - S_b) (V^a + V^b) = S_a V^a - S_b V^b$$

Since $0.5 < C \leq 1$, this condition implies that propositions (6) and (8) are compatible only if the number of seats reserved for candidates from the largest community is more than proportional to its size:

$$(11) \quad S_a/V^a > S_b/V^b \quad (V^a > V^b)$$

Whereas over-representing the minority in the parliament may also be justified as a form of protection, an over-representation of the majority is less likely to be approved. Nonetheless, in a consociational institutional system, it is a lighter concession for the

minority than it might appear, since one of the main consociational principles is the veto power of the minority group. If this veto power is sufficiently extended, then allowing more seats than required by proportionality to the largest group does not entail that the smallest group will be overruled by the majority.

Relaxing proposition (8) is the last possibility. In this case, propositions (6) and (7) will be respected only if:

$$(12) \quad V^a (1 - C_a) = V^b (1 - C_b) \quad (0.5 < C \leq 1)$$

A nice way to satisfy this condition is to define the coefficient C as follows:

$$(13) \quad C_a = D + [V^a / (V^a + V^b)] * (1 - D)$$

with D = coefficient reserved exclusively for internal votes independently of the respective size of different communities

According to this formula, the weight given to all internal votes of a community is determined in making the sum of, firstly, a politically determined coefficient D and, secondly, a part of $1 - D$ proportional to the size of this community. For example, in Belgium, the Flemish community includes around 60% of the whole population and the French speaking community the remaining 40%. Therefore, if the coefficient D is fixed at 0.5, the respective weight of both communities for the election of Flemish representatives would be 0.8¹¹ and 0.2. In contrast, for the election of French speaking representatives, the weight of internal votes would be only 0.7¹² whereas the external votes would weigh 0.3. This way of defining C ensures that voters of both groups have even political power and that the number of representatives of both groups is proportional to their respective sizes, but the largest community has a stronger influence on the election of representatives of the minority than the smallest community on the election of representatives of the majority.

¹¹ Indeed $0.5 + 60\% (1 - 0.5) = 0.8$.

¹² $0.5 + 40\% (1 - 0.5) = 0.7$.

Hence, following on which proposition is relaxed, there are theoretically three possible versions of MPV. Which version is best-suited for a specific society is mainly dependent on the empirical context and political will. If the first concern is to protect minorities, relaxing the equality between individuals is the best solution. When such a solution is unacceptable for the largest group, over-representing the majority in the parliament is conceivable only if a strong veto power is guaranteed to the minority. Eventually, a communal asymmetry of the weight of external votes may be adequate when the strongest centrifugal forces belong to the smallest group.¹³

Complementary Dispositions

Constituency Design

As it would be paradoxical to allow members of a group to vote for a candidate of another group, without allowing all members of this candidate's group to vote for him, MPV requires one general constituency for each ethnic group. This means that candidates of an ethnic community will compete all together for the seats reserved for this community. The example of the Netherlands, where all of the 150 representatives are elected in a national constituency, illustrates that List-PR works perfectly well in a very large constituency. Actually, reducing the number of constituencies strengthens the proportionality between the number of votes cast in favour of a party and the number of seats won by this party (LIJPHART1994a: 11). MPV is thus a highly proportional system.

Constituencies may be territorially drawn when the ethnic groups live in different parts of the country, but constituency boundaries may also be defined regarding the ethnicity of voters independently of the place where they reside. The latter solution allows, moreover, voters to choose their ethnic identity in the polling booth. For instance, Belgium currently mixes these two systems. Despite the fact that both Flanders and Wallonia include some small minorities of the other linguistic community, the voters living in those regions are deemed Flemish and French-speaking voters respectively. In contrast, the inhabitants of Brussels decide in the polling booth whether they will vote to elect Flemish or French-speaking candidates. In this way, the different ethnic groups

¹³ In a bicameral legislature, an interesting option would be to relax a different proposition in each house. I am indebted to **** for this suggestion.

define themselves at the moment of the election.¹⁴ In the case of MPV, if the size of each ethnic group is not known before the election, the number of seats reserved for each group may be calculated according to the number of internal votes expressed.

Party Lists

MPV entails that a vote is basically a choice among different parties, rather than in favour of a specific candidate. Nevertheless, party lists do not need to be closed. A list is called closed, when the party decides the order in which its candidates will fill the seats it has won. In contrast, a list is open if the voters determine this order. Electors do not vote only for a specific party, but also for the candidates of this party who are their preferences for filling the seats won by this party.

Prima facie adopting open lists for internal ballots but closed lists for external ballots looks interesting. Such a solution would imply that external voters would influence only the balance between the different political *parties* of the other group, whereas the elected *candidates* would be chosen by internal votes. An argument in favour of this arrangement is that the voters' knowledge of candidates of the other community could be insufficient to express a worthwhile vote. Candidates already in power, or celebrities, would be too advantaged in comparison with other candidates. In contrast, restricting the external choice to parties does not suppose that members of the other ethnic group have a broad political culture. Moreover, using closed lists guarantees that the elected candidates are truly the representatives of their own ethnic group. Indeed, this arrangement avoids a situation where parties of one community will put on their lists candidates identified with the other community (such as, for instance, French-speakers living in Flanders), which will be elected only thanks to external votes.

However, the use of open lists would entail a competition between candidates of one and the same party. If the lists are closed for external ballots, ethnic exclusivism would likely be the most important mode of individual differentiation. That could reduce

¹⁴ On the other hand, such an arrangement risks creating some opportunities of strategic voting. For instance, a French-speaker could pretend to be Flemish in order to help her favourite party to pass the internal threshold described below. *** drew my attention to this danger.

the capacity of MPV to strengthen moderation.¹⁵ Consequently, it might be preferable to keep the same kind of lists (open or closed) for both internal and external ballots.

Internal Threshold and Quota

Moreover, it is necessary to prevent not only candidates but also parties from competing for the seats that are reserved for one ethnic group, by explicitly campaigning in the interests of the other group in order to win some seats only through the external votes. Thus, preserving the legitimacy of elected candidates as specific representatives of one community requires adding a complementary condition to MPV: a party may have some candidates elected only if this party obtains a sufficient number of internal votes.¹⁶

A first solution could be to fix an internal threshold, i.e. a minimal percentage of internal votes that a party must obtain in order to have candidates elected or in order to be allowed to add external votes cast in its favour to its internal result¹⁷. However, satisfying such a threshold may be deemed too easy for large parties and too difficult for small parties. Therefore, it is probably more coherent to define what I call an internal quota (IQ), i.e. requiring that the weight of internal votes in the electoral result of a party exceed a minimal percentage. IQ may be coherently calculated in regard of the value of C , as follows:

$$(14) \quad IQ = xC \quad (0 < x < 1)$$

Using an internal quota¹⁸ means that the maximal electoral result of a party X for the election of the representatives of the group A is:

$$(15) \quad \text{Max } R_a, P_X = [B^a/V^a * C_a] / IQ$$

¹⁵ I am indebted to **** for drawing my attention to this objection.

¹⁶ Similarly, if open lists are used for both internal and external ballots, a candidate may be elected only if this candidate obtains a sufficient number of internal votes. As discussed in the case of parties, this number may be either a threshold or a quota.

¹⁷ In the latter case, if the internal result of a party, even though inferior to the internal threshold, is sufficient to win one or more seats, this party would keep those seats.

¹⁸ An objection to using IQ lays in the technical difficulty raised by the need to adjust electoral results of all parties when the internal result of a party is below IQ .

Level of Government

MPV is mainly an adequate electoral system for election to federal parliament, especially the lower house. Nonetheless, using MPV is conceivable for, at least, every parliament composed of representatives of different ethnic groups. In Belgium, for instance, MPV could be used not only for federal elections but also for electing the parliament of the bilingual Region of Brussels.

Multiplicity of ethnic groups

For the sake of simplicity, I have presented MPV in assuming the case of a society divided only into two ethnic groups. Obviously, MPV may also be used in more complex situations. If the parliament includes specific representatives of more than two ethnic groups, each elector will receive one ballot per group. That means, however, that implementing MPV in a society composed of a very large number of ethnic groups may raise practical difficulties. Actually, consociationalism as such—and not particularly MPV—is more likely to succeed in a state of reasonable size and number of ethnic groups.

Technically, when there are more than two ethnic groups, the easiest solution for calculating an electoral result is to consider all external voters as if they belong to the same group. A more complex possibility is to define a specific coefficient for each community. Such a system may be justified by the desire to give more than proportional weight to some ethnic groups.

Conditions for MPV

There is no reason why a single institutional set and a single electoral system should be the best in all and every divided society. MPV is defended here only with the aim of improving the efficiency of the state in consociational democracies. According to Lijphart (1977: 56), a very favourable condition for consociationalism is the presence of three or four groups of comparable size. Too many groups will render finding agreement between all groups more difficult, whereas a dual segmentation easily leads to confrontation, each gain for a party being perceived as a loss by the other. Therefore, it is in this latter case that the use of MPV would be most justified and needed.

Another essential characteristic for MPV is the existence of non-ethnic cleavages similar in the different groups¹⁹. Intra-ethnic competition will weaken the ethnic cohesion and facilitates inter-ethnic accommodation, especially when those cleavages cross the ethnic boundaries and then foster alliances among parties of different ethnic groups. However, if ethnic conflict dominates the political debate, the winner of the intra-ethnic competition will be the party perceived by members of its own group as the best defender of their own interests (RABUSHKA & SHEPSLE 1972: 66). In such cases, the intra-ethnic competition leads to a radicalisation of political parties and the incentives for accommodation, created by using MPV, are very unlikely to be sufficient to appease ethnic tensions. Indeed, every approach based on incentives faces the same difficulty: it can be successful only if being more moderate on ethnic questions brings more external support than the loss of internal support that this attitude risks. However, the existence of strong non-ethnic cleavages reduces the risk that an internal voter would stop supporting a party that adopts more moderate positions on ethnic issues. Therefore, the stronger the ethnic cleavage is, the greater the loss of internal votes will be; and the stronger the non-ethnic cleavages are, the lower the loss of internal votes will be.

Nonetheless, an obvious objection could be raised. Why would the ethnic cleavage be more influential regarding external votes than internal ones? If a non-ethnic cleavage, such as an economic one, is strong, why would an elector, who usually casts her internal vote for the socialist party of her own community, not also support the socialist party of the other community even if this party is one of the more radical on ethnic questions? However, it is quite unlikely that a left-minded elector will vote for a socialist party of the other community if this party is so aggressive that it restricts social and economic redistribution exclusively to the members of its own community.

In fact, MPV rests on the plausible intuition that, above a level of ethnical radicalism, external electors will refuse to cast their vote in favour of a party who adopts a very aggressive discourse about their ethnic group, even if they appreciate the position of this party on the other political cleavages. In contrast, it is certainly true that below this level an external elector could give more importance to non-ethnic criteria and vote for a party, which is not among the most moderate on ethnic issues. Consequently, the aim of

¹⁹ Therefore, it is doubtful that MPV could work when there is only one party per ethnic group.

MPV is to give parties incentives to remain below this level of ethnical radicalism. Therefore, using MPV allows that non-ethnical cleavages dominate over ethnical ones in determining voters' choices.

Hence, it should be possible to evaluate the probability of improving accommodative behaviour among political representatives of a community relying on MPV, using a formula of the following type:

$$(16) \quad P(A)_a = [(1 - C_a) * O] / E$$

with: $P(A)_a$ = probability to improve accommodative feeling among political representatives of a community A by using MPV

E = strength of ethnic cleavage

O = strength of other cleavages

This formula is only illustrative of the impact on accommodation that the different political cleavages existing in an ethnic group have. A very interesting way to deepen the study of MPV would be to render that formula more precise, notably by adding some complementary variables, such as the number of political parties in the community, the number of ethnic groups in society, or their relative size. Such a formula would be very helpful to assess the weight of external votes required in each specific context to ensure MPV will foster accommodation. Obviously, however, it will be impossible to have an accurate formula before having some empirical cases to study. The capacity of MPV to foster accommodation will be known only after having been put in practice.

In the absence of an accurate formula, the level of the coefficient C is dependent on the political will to emphasise ethnic diversity or social cohesion. C must be sufficiently high to guarantee that candidates elected express the voice of their own community, but also sufficiently low to create an incentive to take into account the interests of the other community. It is certainly a delicate exercise but even if MPV did not succeed in fostering accommodation, even if it were inefficient, it would still work as the List-PR system used classically in consociational democracy.

Thus, the only purpose of MPV is to improve the efficiency of the state in allowing the political debate to be dominated by truly political cleavages. Since using MPV fosters political representatives to find electoral support across ethnic boundaries, it can therefore reduce the risk of intra-ethnic competition leading to the progressive radicalisation of ethnic claims.

Obviously, Belgium is one of the best examples of a consociational society. Therefore, it is a perfect candidate for MPV. It is the Belgian experience that motivates the attempt at combining consociationalism with centripetalism. The favourable conditions for MPV, described above, are present in Belgium. Moreover, the symmetry between the situation at the federal level and at the level of the Region of Brussels might mean that the hope of implementing MPV in Belgium is not completely unrealistic. Indeed, whereas French-speakers are the minority at the federal level, they form a majority of over 80 percent in Brussels, although Brussels is geographically speaking in Flanders. Therefore, MPV could be implemented at both levels in such a way that the concessions given by a linguistic group at one level would be compensated at the other level.

Of course, the opportunity for such fundamental reform might be taken into account only in the context of a deep institutional crisis. However, complex societies, such as Belgium, are always threatened by this kind of crisis. Currently, the strongest threat to Belgian institutions is the worrying rise of the Flemish extreme-right and nationalistic party. The Vlaams Belang (anciently called Vlaams Blok) has become the most popular Flemish party in the two main Belgian towns, Brussels and Antwerp. In both cases, it could soon become impossible to constitute a majority without this party.²⁰

Belgium is a peaceful country. In contrast, an interesting question is whether or not MPV could be used in a society where the ethnic conflict is extreme, such as after a civil war. That question is already very controversial for classical consociationalism (REILLY & REYNOLDS 1999: 46-48). Therefore, the answer for MPV should be negative.

²⁰ However, the probability of a change of electoral system remains very low. The only hope of seeing the adoption of MPV seriously debated among political parties, would be if this reform were advocated by moderate people inside all of the main parties. Those people could be motivated by their common opposition to an electoral system which, fostering ethnic radicalisation, entails their minorisation in their respective parties. More realistically, we may expect one party to promote MPV in order to dissociate itself from the ethnic discourses of the other parties.

In a violent context, it is quite likely that external votes would be cast for candidates without any internal legitimacy, and so they would be wasted. However, the system would be in place and would produce effects in the long run. Actually, the strongest obstacle to MPV in such a context is the low probability that this system would be perceived as legitimate by the population.

Conclusion

If Lijphart (1994b: 222) is probably wrong when he claims that consociationalism is “the only workable type of democracy in deeply divided societies”, the weaker claim, i.e. consociationalism is the only workable type of democracy in *some* deeply divided societies, is quite convincing. However, classical consociationalism, even in a peaceful society, does not prevent the political debate from being paralysed by ethnic issues. Therefore, by adding centripetal incentives to the consociational framework, using MPV aims to preserve the efficiency of the state. Although MPV allows an explicit recognition of ethnic diversity in institutions, it promotes collaboration across ethnic boundaries and emphasises the importance of non-ethnic cleavages.

Nonetheless, an obvious flaw of MPV could be that its centripetal and consociational aims are ineluctably in tension. Either the incentives are strong enough to foster centripetalism, and then elected candidates would cease to represent a specific community; or the incentives are too weak and MPV would simply be inefficient. Centripetalism and consociationalism would be contradictory.²¹ However, only empirical studies could demonstrate or refute that claim and, so far, there is no reason to believe that it would be impossible to find a just milieu between those two extremes – at least given favourable conditions. So far, there is no reason to believe that consociationalism and centripetalism are incompatible.

²¹ For both a criticism and a defence of attempts to combine consociational and centripetal models, see the debate between Horowitz and Van Parijs in SHAPIRO & MACEDO 2000.

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