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## Types and indices of democratic regimes

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**Types and Indices of Democratic Regimes**

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## **Zusammenfassung**

Die Demokratie wird heute nahezu weltweit als die einzig legitime Herrschaftsordnung angesehen. Daß sie in unterschiedlicher Weise institutionalisiert werden kann, führt zu der Frage, welche Form der Demokratie besser oder schlechter ist. Diese Frage kann normativ beantwortet werden, aber auch auf der Grundlage von empirisch feststellbaren Performanzen. Letzteres setzt aber eine theoretische Konzeptualisierung unterschiedlicher Typen demokratischer Regime voraus und die Operationalisierung dieser Typen durch Indizes. Das ist das Thema der Analyse. Typen und Indizes demokratischer Regime werden vor dem Hintergrund eines theoretischen Rahmens miteinander verglichen. Sie werden zu zwei allgemeineren Ansätzen zusammengefasst: dem Präsidentialismus-Parlamentarismus- und dem Veto-Spieler-Ansatz. Das ermöglicht auch einen Vergleich dieser unterschiedlichen Vorgehensweisen bei der Konstruktion von Typen und Indizes demokratischer Regime.

## **Abstract**

Today democracy is seen as the only legitimate form of government almost all over the world. That it can be institutionalized differently leads to the question which kind of democracy might be better or worse. This question can be answered normatively, but also on the basis of different performances that can be determined empirically. The latter requires an adequate theoretical conceptualization of types of democratic regimes and the operationalization of these types in the form of indices. This is the subject of the analysis. Types and indices of democratic regimes that figure in the current comparative and empirical research on democracy are compared against the background of a theoretical framework. They are categorized as presidentialism-parliamentarism-approaches or veto-player-approaches. Thereby, the analysis implies a comparison of these two basic approaches to the construction of types and indices of democratic regimes.



*Dieter Fuchs*

## **Types and Indices of Democratic Regimes**

### **1. The Issue**

Which form of government is the better and which the worse? Aristotle asked this question in the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and his systematic attempt to answer it in 'Politics' can be considered the beginning of political science. With some brief interruptions, the attention of the discipline has since focussed on this issue. The first decades after the Second World War – when structural-functional and behaviourist approaches predominated in the social sciences – experienced one such interruption. Political institutions as the constitutive elements of forms of government were considered as epiphenomena bereft of independent explanatory value (Rothstein 1996). It therefore seemed unnecessary to make a systematic distinction between different institutional arrangements and to undertake the empirical analysis of their effects. The only important distinction drawn was between democracy and autocracy, and in this regard – at least from a Western point of view – it was clear from the outset which was the superior form of government.

Since the beginning of the eighties, there has been a renaissance in the study of political institutions. Probably the most important reason has been the 'third wave' of democratisation (Huntington 1991), i.e., the replacement of autocracies by democracies in many countries around the world. This democratisation wave reached a climax with the collapse of the communist system in the countries of central and eastern Europe. Since a democracy can be institutionalised in different ways, these countries face the question which of the existing forms of democracy ought to be introduced. In view of the problems of governability and legitimation, however, there is discussion in countries with an established democracy, too, about whether the form implemented in the country concerned is the most appropriate. The classical question of political science has thus been taken up again, this time, however, only in comparing different forms of democratic government and not all possible forms of government.

A useful starting point in selecting and designing political institutions is previous experience with their impact in the real world. In this field, however, empirical research has so far supplied ambiguous and sometimes even contradictory findings (Tsebelis 1995). There are two main reasons for this unsatisfactory state of affairs. First, some typologies of

the institutional structure of democracies and the indices based on them have insufficient theoretical grounding. The result is a certain arbitrariness in the selection and operationalization of structural characteristics. Second, the problems addressed differ considerably. Many more recent studies in which institutional variables play a role are concerned with providing the most complete possible explanation for the outcomes of political processes. Such an approach ‘...takes policy outcomes as its primary concern and works its way backward to institutional and partisan characteristics that are responsible for the production of specific policy outcomes’ (Tsebelis 1999: 591). However, if the primary concern is the quality of different forms of democracy, the procedure must be reversed. Instead of working backward from policy outcomes to institutional and other characteristics that explain them, it is necessary to work forward from institutional characteristics – and only from these – to policy outcomes.

The question of the quality of different forms of democracy is relevant from the practical point of view for, among other things, the intentional introduction of a new or the reformation of an old system of government. This practical political relevance requires the focus of interest to be narrowed still further. Only institutional arrangements that can be laid down constitutionally can be deliberately designed. It is not by chance that in his study of ‘constitutional engineering’ Sartori (1994a) is concerned only with the constitutional characteristics of democracies. Lijphart (1984, 1999), too, who has relied strongly on characteristics of the party system and of actor constellations in his analyses of contemporary democracies, has restricted his consideration of ‘constitutional choices’ (1991) and of ‘institutional design’ (1996) largely to constitutional characteristics. However, apart from the question of practical political relevance, it can in principle also be argued that a theoretically plausible concept of institution cannot be developed on the basis of empirically verifiable regularities but only with recourse to legally codified normative expectations of behaviour (Fuchs 1999).

The following study has two aims. The first step is a theoretical-deductive attempt to determine different types of democratic institutional arrangements. We use the established concept of democratic regime (Easton 1979) to refer to these institutional arrangements. The second step is to discuss the most important indices of democratic regimes used in comparative democracy studies in this theoretical framework. The indices concerned are Shugart/Carey’s (1992) and Sartori’s (1994a, 1994b) presidentialism - parliamentarism indices, and several indices that can be allocated to the veto-player approach. They include the ‘index of constitutional structure’ (Huber et al. 1993), the ‘index of institutional pluralism’ (Colomer 1996), the ‘institutional constraints of central state government’ (Schmidt 1996), and an index constructed on the basis of a study by Tsebelis (1995). Lijphart’s (1999) two indices, each of which deals with a dimension of his fundamental distinction

between majoritarian and consensus democracy (the ‘executive-parties index’ and the ‘federal-unitary index’), are to be considered as belonging to the veto-player approach. For the sake of simplicity we use the authors’ names when referring to the indices. In this second step our main concern is to establish what the different indices measure at all and to what extent they are suitable for analysing the quality of different types of democratic regime.

## 2. Typology Construction

Our study is ultimately concerned with the quality of different forms of democracy. Any discussion of this issue presupposes the definition of such forms, and this is generally done by constructing typologies. In empirical democracy research, a multitude of democratic regime typologies has meanwhile been proposed, none of which has, however, managed to gain general acceptance. The most commonly employed is that of Lijphart (1984, 1999), but this, too, needs discussing, as we will be showing in the course of our analysis. These typologies raise at least three serious problems that impose explicit decisions.

The first has already been mentioned in the introduction. It is neither very fruitful nor very informative to construct a typology of democratic regimes per se, as is often attempted by comparative government studies in the classification of constitutions. What characteristics must or can be taken into account depends essentially on the question to be answered. Is the primary concern the effects of different types of democracy – and thus indirectly their quality – or the explanation of policy?

The second problem is the under-complexity of typologies, which are based only on dichotomies such as unicameral/bicameral systems, federalism/unitarism, or two-party/multi-party systems, and plurality/proportional electoral systems. Tsebelis (1995) has stressed that these dichotomies represent more or less important single elements in more complex institutional arrangements, which then constitute certain types. However, taking these individual elements out of their institutional context can produce misleading results. If we follow Tsebelis’ argument, we face the problem of which institutional characteristics to choose – and, in particular, how they are to be configured to form distinct types. A theoretical criterion is needed for this purpose. Tsebelis himself makes further suggestions in this respect, which we will discuss later. This takes us to the third problem, the choice between a deductive and an inductive procedure in selecting and interrelating structural characteristics.

The most prominent example of an inductive procedure is Lijphart’s (1984, 1999) typology of majoritarian and consensus democracies. Lijphart begins the development of this typology with a description of the so-called ‘Westminster’ model of democracy, with reference to the British system. On this basis, the ‘majoritarian democracy’ type is elaborated.



From the opposing characteristics of majoritarian democracy he constructs the contrasting type of ‘consensus democracy.’ Many authors similarly define ‘presidential democracy’ with an eye on the specific example of the United States. The problem with this procedure is that a democratic regime in a given country can exhibit a mixture of differing characteristics. In Lijphart’s terminology, they can contain both majoritarian and consensus elements. The constitution of a country is not very likely to be consistently designed in obedience to only one principle. However, without an external and abstract theoretical criterion no decision can be made on the extent to which a specific regime represents a mixture of differing institutional elements or a ‘pure’ type of democracy.

In his final typology of majoritarian and consensus democracy, Lijphart crosses two subdimensions, namely the ‘executive-parties’ and ‘federal-unitary’ dimensions. He obtains these subdimensions through factor analysis of a large number of structural characteristics. However, this permits determination only of empirical coincidence. The empirical co-occurrence of certain structural characteristics in itself reveals nothing about the attributes and effects of these structural characteristics and their combination. For example, it cannot be excluded that a quite specific combination of structural characteristics that is empirically relatively rarely has a strong impact on political performances.

In our study these problems impose two fundamental decisions. First, it must be clear what end the typology serves, and, second, a theoretical-deductive procedure is advisable. In this procedure, the general standards for typology construction developed and justified by the theory of science provide initial orientation. According to Hempel (1952), a typology should satisfy two main requirements. It should be as parsimonious as possible and it should have the greatest possible discriminatory power vis-à-vis reality. Furthermore, a typology should permit a clear and exhaustive classification of all relevant cases, and it should have the greatest possible explanatory power (Lange and Meadwell 1991).

Discriminatory power and explanatory power can ultimately be determined only empirically. If these two requirements are to be met, a meaningful typology must first be constructed that satisfies the two requirements of parsimony and discriminatory power or unambiguity. Parsimony is required in pursuit of the fundamental scientific aim of obtaining generalizable knowledge. Accordingly, a typology cannot be improved by making it more and more complex but by attempting to establish an optimum balance between theoretically justified abstraction from reality and the most appropriate description of reality.

We attempt to identify fundamental dimensions and distinctions of a democratic regime to provide the basis for constructing optimally parsimonious and powerful typologies and for operationalizing these typologies.

### 3. Dimensions of a Democratic Regime

Politics is concerned with the production and implementation of decisions with binding effect on everybody. The purpose of this function is to regulate conflicts within a collectivity and to attain collective goals. The ability to make and implement collectively binding decisions is termed political power; power can thus be understood as the decisive medium of politics (Parsons 1969; Luhmann 1974). But political power is a variable element, and this variability depends on two main factors. First, on the way in which power or government is exercised, and, second, how holders of power or rulers are chosen (Loewenstein 1957; Bobbio 1987; Sartori 1987).

Table 1: General Types of Governmental System

		Selection of the rulers	
		Self-selection	Selection by the people
Exercise of rule	Concentration in one institution	Monocratic autocracy	Monocratic democracy (antique democracy)
	Distribution among several institutions	Polycratic autocracy	<i>Polycratic democracy (liberal democracy)</i>

Combining these two dimensions with each of two forms produces a simple typology of governmental systems (see table 1). The decisive criterion for selecting rulers is whether they are chosen by the people and thus by the addressees of government, or whether groups and persons appropriate ruling positions by means of the instruments of power at their disposal. The decisive criterion for exercising rule is whether powers are concentrated in one institution (or in one person) or whether they are distributed among several institutions. Four types of governmental system result: on the one hand monocratic autocracy or polycratic autocracy, and, on the other, monocratic democracy or polycratic democracy. If we replace the Greek term kratos by another Greek word for rule, arché, autocracy and democracy become monarchy (Steffani 1979) and polyarchy (Dahl 1971, 1989). The antique democracy of classical Athens, where power was largely concentrated in the popular assembly, was monocratic democracy. Liberal democracy, in contrast, is polycratic democracy – or, in Dahl’s terms, a polyarchy – where the distribution of power among several institutions is constitutive. Since practically all contemporary democracies are liberal democracies, we concentrate our further analysis on specifying this general type of governmental system.

Table 2: Dimensions of Polycratic (Liberal) Democracy

		Structural categories	
		Formal	Empirical
Base functions	Exercise of rule	<i>Governmental system</i>	Relationship between governing and opposition parties
	Selection of rulers	Electoral system	Party system

The specification of polycratic (liberal) democracy in table 2 is concerned with the structure in which the exercise of rule and the selection of rulers takes place. Two structural categories are distinguished: formal structure and empirical or informal structure. Formal structure is the constitutionally defined and thus legally binding set of rules laying down how the two base functions are to be implemented from a procedural point of view. Institutions constitute distinguishable rule complexes with strategically significant functions within the overall institutional arrangements (Parsons 1969; Crawford and Ostrom 1995; Fuchs 1999). The selection of rulers is determined by the electoral system or electoral law, and the exercise of rule by the codification of institutions and their relations. The latter can be termed governmental system (see table 2). The governmental system and the electoral system together form the democratic regime of a country (Sartori 1994a).

Political scientists postulate a second structural category, which is concerned with interaction between the actors of the democratic regime. This structure therefore constitutes actor constellations that are controlled by informal rules and which can be determined only empirically. They can in so far be called either informal or empirical structures (Easton 1990). One example of such an empirical structure is the party system, which can be described in terms of the number of parties and the degree of polarisation between the parties (Sartori 1976). A party system comes into being through elections; the outcome of elections is influenced but by no means determined by the electoral system (see the relevant arrow in table 2). Just as important are a multitude of changeable societal factors. Actor structures are therefore less defined, more variable, and less predictable than institutional structures. The question is to what extent actor constellations can be considered structures at all and in isolation from the specific level of individual and collective action. It is plausible only if it can be assumed that there are durable constellations of actors to which individual actors adjust and which constrain their behaviour in a systematic manner. To call merely temporary and contingent constellations of actors structures that constrain the action of a given individual actor – as occurs in some veto-player studies – is in our opinion inappropriate.

Regardless of the conceptual problems involved in an informal or empirical structure, this category can be largely ignored for our specific purposes. We are interested in the quality of different democratic regimes that are constitutionally defined and can thus be intentionally designed. Given this focus, the formal (constitutional) structure of the democratic regime is the central concern of our analysis. The following section discusses the basic options for constructing typologies of democratic regimes.

#### 4. Typological Approaches to Democratic Regimes

The fundamental criterion for describing and distinguishing democratic regimes is the distribution of power, with the two poles concentration and dispersion of power. In the case of a democratic regime it can only be a question of relative proximity to one or other of the two poles, for a minimum of power distribution among different institutions is a defining characteristic of liberal democracy (see table 1). The distribution of power was the aspect that dominated the constitutional debate in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries – the terms then current were the separation or division of powers – and is still the prime point of reference for almost all typologies of democratic regimes. In a democratic regime power is distributed among different governmental institutions.

In this conceptualisation, the democratic regime is largely equated with the democratic system of government. The electoral system as the institutional mode of selecting rulers is taken systematically into account by none of the typologies and indices we have examined. In some indices it is merely one (additive) characteristic of the governmental system. Sartori (1994a) considers the electoral system and the governmental system – as the two base functions of liberal democracy: selection of rulers, exercise of rule (see table 2) – to be the two fundamental dimensions of a liberal democracy. But he proposes no typology and no index constructed on this basis.

The two fundamental institutions of the governmental system of liberal democracy are the government and parliament. Each of these institutions has its specific function in the exercise of power. The relationship between the two is the point of departure for one of the oldest and simplest typologies of democratic regimes: the distinction between presidentialism and parliamentarism (Loewenstein 1957; Verney 1959; Steffani 1979; Shugart and Carey 1992; Weaver and Rockman 1993; Sartori 1994a, 1994b). This distinction is initially somewhat misleading, for it suggests that presidential systems are not parliamentary systems. This is, of course, not the case. As in all liberal democracies, parliament has a ‘significant’ function in the presidential system, too (Steffani 1979) – in legislation, in the budget, and in controlling the government. The difference between presidentialism and

parliamentarism lies in the constitutionally defined relationship between parliament and government.

Two paired concepts are used to describe this relationship, which mean substantially the same: autonomy (presidentialism) versus dependence (parliamentarism) and separation (presidentialism) versus integration or fusion (parliamentarism). The meaning of these paired concepts is generally defined operationally by stating certain constitutional characteristics. Shugart/Carey (1992) and Sartori (1994a, 1994b) describe a purely presidential system in terms of the following characteristics: 1. the president is both head of state and head of government (monistic executive) and he is also directly elected by the people; 2. the tenures of president and parliament are fixed and there are practically no mutual powers of removal or dissolution; 3. the president determines the composition of the government and the decision-making activities of the government. Although in principle presidentialism-parliamentarism typologies describe parliamentary systems in complementarity to these characteristics, they are less clearly defined. The most important characteristic of parliamentarism is the choice of the head of government by parliament and the responsibility of the government to parliament. The interdependence of government and parliament is most marked when parliament removes the government by a vote of no confidence, and the government can dissolve parliament (Loewenstein 1957). Both possibilities imply that there can ultimately be no fixed terms for parliament and government. These constitutional characteristics of the parliamentary system can, however, be frustrated if the government is formed by one party over a long period and can rely on a majority in parliament. The institutional design of the governmental system imposed by the constitution or by constitutional equivalents is then subordinated to the constellation of the party system. The political outcome of this subordination is the extreme predominance of the government over parliament, as has been the case in Britain. And this is precisely the state of affairs that Lijphart (1984, 1999) has in mind when he proposes his 'executive-parties' dimension as a subdimension of the democratic regime. However, as we have explained, such a constellation of government and opposition is the relatively contingent product of a number of factors not restricted to institutional characteristics like the electoral system.

The archetype of a presidential system is the United States. The advantages and disadvantages of this form of government are often discussed on the basis of this example. The main reason why the fathers of the American constitution established a 'system of separation of powers' (Weaver and Rockman 1993: 2) was to prevent tyranny and any abuse of power. In the current discussion on the effects of presidentialism – and thus of parliamentarism as the contrasting type of regime – this aspect has tended to be relegated to the background. Attention is focused on the efficiency of decision-making processes and the effectiveness of the intended policies (a compilation of this discussion is provided by

Weaver and Rockman 1993; see also Schmidt 1995 and Tsebelis 1995). It is repeatedly assumed that, because of the relatively marked autonomy of the government (president) on the one hand and parliament (Congress) on the other, the presidential system has at least three major disadvantages over the parliamentary system: higher transaction costs, less coherence among individual policies, and less capacity for political innovation. This assumption, astonishing in the light of American history, would first of all need to be empirically verified by comparative studies – existing findings tend to be contradictory. But even if these assumptions are taken as premises, they raise two problems. First, the parliamentary system cannot without further ado be described in contrast to the presidential system as a ‘system of fusion of powers.’ As far as the distribution of power criterion is concerned, there is considerable variance within existing parliamentary systems. Second, the mutual independence of executive and legislature underlying the presidentialism-parliamentarism typology is only one of the constitutional characteristics of power distribution (others include bicameralism and federalism). That the governmental system of the United States is empirically characterised not only by presidentialism but also by federalism and bicameralism does not necessarily mean that this is true of other presidential systems – and this is observably not the case.

The fact of a plurality of institutional characteristics that play a role in the distribution of power is taken up by the veto-player approach and placed in a quite independent theoretical context. This approach refers explicitly to classical ideas of the separation of powers, reformulating and formalising them with recourse to theorems and methods taken from the rational-choice paradigm. Formalisation is concerned primarily with the relationship between independent variables (veto-player indices) and dependent variables (measurements of ‘policy outcomes’ or ‘policy innovation’). In our context, however, we are interested only in ideas developed in the framework of the veto-player approach on distinguishing types of regime. The best-known variant of this approach is that of Tsebelis. One of his definitions of the veto player states: ‘a veto player is any player – institutional or partisan – who can block the adoption of a policy’ (Tsebelis 1995: 305). An institution counts as a veto player only if it has a formal power of veto. The number of institutional veto players and their power of veto is defined by the constitution. In contrast, Tsebelis (1995: 304) sees the ‘partisan veto player’ as endogenously specified by the party system and government coalitions (this corresponds to the empirical structural categories shown in table 2). Tsebelis’ dependent variable is ‘policy innovation,’ and both categories of veto player restrict the action of policy-process actors. In this way they determine ‘policy innovation.’

We are interested in institutional veto players. Tsebelis (1995) and Tsebelis and Money (1997) stress the particular relevance of two constitutional characteristics that define different institutional veto players: presidentialism and bicameralism. Federalism is also dis-

cussed. However, it is not clear whether these authors see it as contained in bicameralism or as a separate constitutional characteristic. The question Tsebelis explicitly discusses of whether there are further institutional veto players and what influence they have will be looked at when we examine the indices of democratic regimes. These three constitutional characteristics coincide with the basic distinctions made by ‘traditional’ institutionalism (Loewenstein 1957). Presidentialism and bicameralism are concerned with the horizontal structure of the democratic system; the former with the relationship between government and parliament, and the latter with the internal structure of parliament. Federalism, in contrast, is concerned with the vertical structure of the democratic system. We can speak of a federal system when there are parliaments and governments with their own powers in territorial units below the national level (states, provinces, Länder). In the political system of a country, these federal entities constitute veto players in policy formation, regardless of whether they are represented at the national level in an upper house. There is extensive and differentiated discussion on the importance and effects of all three constitutional characteristics – presidentialism, bicameralism, and federalism. In the theory of Tsebelis – and in other veto-player approaches (e.g., Immergut 1992) – they are largely left out of account. Tsebelis (1995) and Tsebelis and Money (1997) relate these characteristics merely to the theoretical criterion of the distribution of power, and with respect to this criterion all three characteristics are functionally equivalent. In the concluding remarks we will address the question whether this degree of abstraction and the functional equivalence of the institutional characteristics thus gained is too great.

## **5. Indices of Democratic Regimes**

The preceding section dealt with two approaches to constructing typologies of democratic regimes, the presidentialism-parliamentarism approach and the veto-player approach. This section describes and discusses the indices that can be assigned to these two approaches.

The two most important indices of the presidentialism-parliamentarism typology are those developed by Shugart/Carey (1992) and Sartori (1994a, 1994b). Both are concerned with only one characteristic of the democratic regime, the relationship (separation or integration) between the executive and the legislative functions. The decisive question for index construction is the operationalization of this relationship. Both indices assume an operational definition of a ‘pure’ presidential system (cf. the preceding section). Sartori (1994b: 106) states: ‘... a system is presidential if, and only if, the head of state (president) (1) receives office by popular election, (2) during his preestablished tenure cannot be discharged by parliamentary vote, and (3) heads the government or governments which he appoints. When all these conditions are met, then we doubtlessly have a ‘pure’ presidential

system' (Shugart 1993: 30 offers a similar definition). On the basis of this definition, the situation initially seems to be clear: 'Presidential and parliamentary systems are generally defined by mutual exclusion. ... To be sure, a presidential system is non-parliamentary, and conversely, a parliamentary system is nonpresidential. However, division of real world cases between these two classes yields both incongruous bed-fellows and dubious inclusions' (Sartori 1994b: 106). The problem is accordingly to determine the categories that lie between 'pure' presidentialism and 'pure' parliamentarism.

Shugart/Carey (1992) and Shugart (1993) propose a relatively complex typology that also constitutes an ordinal index: '1. 'Pure' presidential, 2. President-parliamentary, 3. Premier-presidential, 4. Parliamentary with 'president,' 5. 'Pure' parliamentary' (see table 3). What is particularly important in this typology is the differentiation of presidentialism. In contrast to 'pure' presidentialism, the presidential-parliamentary system has a dualistic executive with president and premier, in which the premier heads the government and is dependent on the president (e.g., Russia). In the premier-presidential system the executive is also dualistic, but the premier is independent of the president (e.g., Poland). Both types of parliamentary system are characterised by a monistic executive. In the case of parliamentarism with a directly elected president there is a president directly elected by the people, but he has either no or very few powers (e.g. Austria).

*Table 3: Presidentialism-parliamentarism Indices of Democratic Regimes*

<i>Types</i>	<i>Defining characteristics</i>	<i>Examples</i>
<i>Shugart/Carey (1992)</i>		
1. Pure presidentialism	- Direct election of the president - Monistic executive with president	USA
2. Presidential-parliamentary system	- Direct election of the president - Dualistic executive with premier dependent on the president	Russia
3. Premier-presidential system	- Direct election of the president - Dualistic executive with premier <i>independent</i> of the president	Poland
4. Parliamentarism with directly elected president	- Direct election of the president - Monistic executive with premier	Austria
5. Pure parliamentarism	- No direct election of the president - Monistic executive with premier	Germany, Britain
<i>Sartori (1994a, 1994b)</i>		
1. Pure presidentialism	- Direct election of the president - President heads the executive	USA
2. Semi-presidentialism	- Direct election of the president - Dualistic executive with premier <i>independent</i> of the president	Russia, Poland
3. Parliamentarism	- No direct election of the president - Monistic executive with premier	Austria, Germany, Britain



Shugart/Carey's typology is notable for the asymmetry between the two poles of pure presidentialism and pure parliamentarism, which is not theoretically accounted for. Basically, it is not so much a presidentialism-parliamentarism typology as a presidentialism typology. Sartori's (1994a, 1994b) typology is both more symmetrical and simpler. According to Sartori, the typology of Shugart/Carey is not clear-cut in differentiating the various types and is unnecessarily complex. He restricts himself to the three-way distinction between presidentialism, semi-presidentialism and parliamentarism (see table 3). Which of the two typologies is ultimately the more appropriate can be measured firstly by how well (exhaustively and clearly) the democratic regimes of specific countries can be classified on this basis, and, secondly, by its explanatory power. However, this is not the purpose of our study.

Whereas the presidentialism-parliamentarism typologies concentrate on this one structural characteristic, presidentialism in the veto-player typologies, which take this characteristic into account, is merely one structural characteristic among others. Table 4 shows the selection of structural characteristics by indices of democratic regimes that we ascribe to the veto-player approach. With the sole exception only of Lijphart (1999), the authors Huber et al. (1993), Tsebelis (1995), Colomer (1996), and Schmidt (1996) more or less explicitly acknowledge commitment to this approach.

The structural characteristics shown in table 4 are arranged in terms of the dimensions of a polycratic (liberal) democracy as depicted in table 2. This classification of characteristics makes it easier to determine what the specific indices measure. One distinction shown in table 2 has not yet been discussed, namely that between the primary and secondary characteristics of the governmental system. This distinction directly affects the question of the importance and weighting of institutional characteristics. With reference to Tsebelis (1995), institutional characteristics can be classified as peripheral if they are relevant only for decision-making on certain subjects (e.g., independent central bank in financial policy and economic decisions), or if – under certain circumstances – they can merely amend decisions that have been already taken (e.g., constitutional courts). Primary structural characteristics are those that directly, permanently, and comprehensively structure or limit policy decision making processes.

The index that differs most from all the others with respect to the selection of structural characteristics is Lijphart's 'executive-parties dimension' (see table 4).<sup>1</sup> It includes only empirical structural characteristics that relate to actor constellations. The other indices are based largely on formal (constitutional) structural characteristics, and mainly on those of the governmental system. Only Huber et al.'s index also includes electoral law, and that of

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1 The attribute "interest group pluralism" listed by Lijphart has not been included in Table 4. According to our conceptualization it is no structural attribute of democratic regimes.

Colomer takes an empirical structural characteristic into account as well (effective number of parliamentary parties).

*Table 4: Selection of Structural Characteristics in Veto-player Indices of Democratic Regimes*

	Lijphart (1999)	Huber et al. (1993)	Tsebelis (1995)	Colomer (1996)	Schmidt (1996)
<i>A. Formal (constitutional) structure</i>					
<i>1. System of government</i>					
<i>a. Primary characteristics</i>					
Presidentialism		X	X	X	
Bicameralism	X <sup>1</sup>	X	X	X	X
Federalism	X <sup>1</sup>	X	X	X	X
<i>b. Secondary characteristics</i>					
Constitutional rigidity	X <sup>1</sup>				X
Constitutional court	X <sup>1</sup>				
Referendums		X			X
Independent central bank	X <sup>1</sup>				X
EU membership					X
<i>2. Electoral system</i>					
Electoral law		X			
<i>B. Empirical (actor) structure</i>					
<i>1. Relationship between governing and opposition parties</i>					
Composition of the government	X <sup>2</sup>				
Dominance of the executive (Stability of the government)	X <sup>2</sup>				
<i>2 Party system</i>					
Effective no. of parliamentary parties	X <sup>2</sup>			X	
Disproportionality of elections	X <sup>2</sup>				

1 'Federal-unitary dimension'

2 'Executive-parties dimension'

In the context of our theoretical distinctions, this extension is problematic. If the governmental and the electoral systems are the two fundamental dimensions of a democratic regime (see table 2), then they must also be equal in weight and systematically linked. Merely additively appending a structural characteristic of the electoral system to several structural characteristics of the governmental system is thus insufficient. A similar argument can be advanced for the combination of formal and empirical structural characteristics. On the other hand, taking account of only one additional structural characteristic that does not belong to the governmental system in the case of Huber et al. and Colomer is of little quantitative consequence. Both construct additive indices of five (Huber et al.) and four (Colomer) structural characteristics.<sup>2</sup> With the exception of Lijphart's 'executive-

2 With the exception of Lijphart's (1999) two indices, all other indices are additive. Lijphart's indices are averages of standardized variables.

parties dimension,' the indices can thus essentially be considered as measurements of the governmental system.

The five indices of the governmental system – Lijphart ('federal-unitary dimension'), Huber et al., Tsebelis, Colomer, and Schmidt – differ in two aspects. First, whether or not they take presidentialism as a primary structural characteristic, and, second, whether they take secondary structural characteristics into account alongside primary ones. The indices of Lijphart and Schmidt take no account of presidentialism. This is somewhat surprising, because presidentialism is generally regarded as a prototype of a system of separation of powers (see especially Weaver and Rockman 1993, but also Tsebelis 1995). Lijphart (1984) offers an empirical argument for excluding this characteristic. In his factor analysis, presidentialism weighs only very lightly on the 'federal-unitary dimension.' In our opinion, this empirical finding is, however, not a convincing reason to exclude a structural characteristic. If we take distribution of power as a central point of reference for the development of a typology – as Lijphart does – presidentialism is without any doubt an indicator of the distribution of power. Schmidt does not explicitly justify exclusion of presidentialism. However, justification for so doing can be formulated. The need to include presidentialism in a veto-player index is reduced in proportion to how far it is assumed that the effects of presidentialism can be attributed to characteristics other than the mere fact that the president is an institutional veto player. Other characteristics that come in question are, for example, the personalisation of politics in presidentialism and the strong dependence of the president on public opinion. This in turn would imply that the veto-player approach alone does not suffice to identify the different forms of democratic regime.

Still more fraught with consequences than the question of including presidentialism in the typology is the second aspect of additionally including secondary structural characteristics of the governmental system. This is done in both Lijphart's 'federal-unitary dimension' and in the index developed by Schmidt. In both cases the number of secondary structural characteristics even exceeds that of primary characteristics (see table 4). This is especially important for Schmidt's additive index, which assumes individual structural characteristics to be equal in weight. This extension of institutional veto players has its advantages and disadvantages. The disadvantages lie in their labelling as secondary structural characteristics. These characteristics have to do with institutions of the governmental system that play a role in political decision-making processes either on specific topics only or after the fact. This state of affairs can either invite excluding the secondary characteristics from index construction, as Tsebelis (1995) does, or placing less weight on secondary than on primary characteristics. But there is no theoretical criterion available for such weighting, so that this solution cannot be put into practice. A third alternative is to include secondary structural characteristics in index construction only with respect to specific topics. If,

for example, economic performance is to be explained, the characteristic ‘independent central bank’ would be included. But this would mean that different indices would need to be constructed depending on what policies are to be explained. However, if we want to judge the quality of different institutional arrangements, it does not make much sense constantly to vary the indices for recording these institutional arrangements.

Although secondary structural characteristics can become players only on specific topics, temporarily, and at a subsequent stage, it is quite possible for a plurality of such veto players together to constitute a democratic regime that considerably restricts decision-making processes as a whole. This possibility cannot be covered by a type and index construction confined to primary structural characteristics. In constructing an index, it must therefore be decided what weight is to be given to this possibility and whether the problem of implicitly overweighting secondary structural characteristics in the construction of the additive index is to be accepted.

The theoretically less equivocal solution is certainly to construct types and indices only on the basis of central governmental-system structural characteristics. Tsebelis appears to have adopted this procedure most fully (see table 4). However, this is only the case for his selection of the institutional veto players to be considered in principle. Whether they actually do count as veto players is made to depend on another criterion. This can most easily be demonstrated in the case of bicameralism. Only if the majority relations between the parties represented in the upper house differ from those in the lower house does the upper house count as an additional veto player (Tsebelis 1995). If the same parties have a majority in both houses, the two houses count as only one veto player. For Tsebelis, the status of institutional veto players thus also depends on contingent actor constellations. This means that the index for a given country can change over time even though the constitutional structure does not change. Tsebelis’ procedure can be useful if one is primarily interested in explaining specific policy outcomes, as Tsebelis explicitly states (cf. introduction). However, it is not an appropriate procedure if the prime concern is to evaluate constitutional structure. In the following section we therefore construct an index that takes up Tsebelis’ selection of institutional veto players but leaves their dependence on actor constellations out of account.

## **6. Dimensions of the Indices**

We have assigned the indices we have analysed to the presidentialism-parliamentarism and veto-player typological approaches. This has been done on the basis of theoretical considerations and of self assessment by the authors who developed the indices in question. In this section we examine the extent to which this a priori assignment is empirically justified.

For this purpose we performed an exploratory factor analysis. In accordance with our allocation we expect two factors. The two presidentialism-parliamentarism indices (Shugart/Carey, Sartori) ought to constitute the one, and the veto-player indices (Lijphart's 'federal-unitary dimension,' Huber et al., Colomer, and Schmidt) the other.

Besides the indices already described, two others were included in the factor analysis: a 'minimal governmental system index A' and a 'minimal governmental system index B.' Both are additive indices. They are termed 'minimal' because they are based exclusively on formal (constitutional) and primary structural characteristics. These are bicameralism and federalism in index A, and in index B presidentialism is added to these two characteristics. The 'minimal governmental index B' is thus a new construction, which is based on Tsebelis' selection of institutional characteristics (see table 4). Of the eight indices included in the factor analysis, these two – together with Sartori's presidentialism-parliamentarism index – are by far the most parsimonious.

Table 5: Factor analysis<sup>1</sup> of the indices of democratic regimes

<i>Indices</i>	<i>Components</i>	
	1 (veto players)	2 (presidentialism)
Lijphart ('federal-unitary dimension')	.95	
Huber et al.	.85	-.39
Colomer	.84	-.42
Schmidt	.92	
Shugart/Carey		.98
Sartori	-.26	.95
Minimal governmental system index A <sup>2</sup>	-.97	
Minimal governmental system index B <sup>3</sup> ('Tsebelis')	-.89	.42

1 Principal component analysis: varimax rotation; explained variance = 92%; N = 23

2 Formal and primary structural characteristics: bicameralism and federalism

3 Formal and primary structural characteristics: bicameralism and presidentialism.

Source: Lijphart (Lijphart 1999); Huber et al, Colomer, Schmidt (Schmidt 1996); Shugart/Carey (1992), Sartori (1994a)

The results of the factor analysis are not very surprising (see table 5). Precisely the two expected factors or components are extracted: a component of the veto-player indices and a component of the presidentialism indices. However, there are some remarkable detailed results. The factor loading of all veto-player indices on the first component is extraordinarily high. The indices that exhibit low loading are those that include presidentialism as a structural characteristic and therefore exhibit incidental loading on the second component, which refers to presidentialism. For the presidentialism components, the factor loading of the more complex indices of Shugart/Carey and the more simple index of Sartori are at

almost the same level. These results permit conclusions about the two problems of index construction we have already mentioned. The distinction between simple and complex indices and between indices that are based only on primary structural characteristics of the governmental system or that also take secondary structural characteristics into account play no role in factor structure. All veto-player indices record the latent construct equally well, and the same is true for the two presidentialism indices. This implies that the more parsimonious indices, too, adequately measure the given latent construct. The practical consequences for research will be discussed in the concluding remarks.

Two further empirical findings should first be reported. One is concerned with the relationship between the presidentialism and veto-player indices. Shugart/Carey's presidentialism index correlates with the three veto-player indices that contain only constitutional characteristics of the governmental system to the exclusion of presidentialism (Lijphart's 'federal-unitary dimension,' Schmidt, minimal governmental system index A) with an average score of  $r = .21$ . There is thus a certain link, but not a very strong one. Over and beyond the factor analysis, this result clearly shows that the presidentialism and veto-player approaches are not simply interchangeable. According to this finding, too, presidentialism is clearly not only a subdimension of the distribution-of-powers metadimension.

The second result is concerned with Lijphart's 'executive-parties dimension,' which includes only empirical structural characteristics or actor constellations (see table 4). If an index of this dimension is included in the factor analysis, then – in addition to the two shown in table 3 – a third component emerges, which is constituted by precisely this index. This empirical finding confirms our theoretical assumption that Lijphart's 'executive-parties dimension' records something quite different from what is recorded by all the other indices.

## 7. Concluding remarks

Our study of the types and indices of democratic regimes has two general points of reference. The first is the evaluation of different types of democratic regime. This evaluation can be concerned with the political performances of the regime. The second point of reference is the intentional implementation of a new democratic regime or the structural reformation of an existing one. Two conclusions must be drawn with respect to these points of reference. First, types of democratic regime can be distinguished only on the basis of constitutional structural characteristics, for only this category of characteristic can be designed intentionally. Second, the type of democratic regime in a country must be determined independently of particular and varying policies. Two reasons can be offered for the latter. If a regime type is to be evaluated, it must, as the object of evaluation, be kept constant. Fur-

thermore, such evaluation can be based only on long-term and comprehensive performances of the regime type and not on individual policy outcomes. The point of reference of our analysis is thus not the most complete possible explanation of specific policy outcomes, which has hitherto been the goal of most studies in the context of the veto-player approach.

On the basis of a theoretical determination of the concept and dimensions of a democratic regime, a number of common types and indices have been described and discussed. Two basic approaches to type and index construction have been distinguished: first, the presidentialism-parliamentarism approach and, second, the veto-player approach. This theoretical distinction has been empirically confirmed by factor analysis of the indices.

The theoretically most unambiguous of the veto-player indices are those of Lijphart ('federal-unitary dimension') and Schmidt, as well as the two newly constructed minimal governmental system indices. All four indices are based exclusively on formal structural characteristics of the governmental system. Whereas Lijphart's and Schmidt's indices include primary and secondary structural characteristics, the two minimal governmental system indices are restricted to primary structural characteristics (bicameralism, federalism, and, in one of the two, presidentialism as well). These four indices are the most appropriate for analysing the effects of different types of democratic regime on political performances.

As the factor analysis of the indices shows, the latent construct – the extent of distribution of power, operationalized by the number of veto players – is equally well measured by all four indices. This result is important for research practice. If as many countries with democratic regimes as possible are to be included in the empirical analysis, the parsimonious indices can be used without the risk of 'conceptual stretching' (Sartori 1970; Collier 1993). This concept was coined by Sartori to denote the problem of reducing the intension of a concept to increase the extension of the analysis.

Another and still open question is which of the two basic approaches to type and index construction is the more suitable for recording the democratic regime in specific countries. The distinction between presidentialism and parliamentarism can be integrated in the veto-player approach, so that it appears to be the more comprehensive. However, in the veto-player approach presidentialism is only one among other veto-players and, in this sense, constitutes a functional equivalent to the other structural characteristics. Among the additive indices, the predominant measuring instrument in the veto-player approach, the characteristics of presidentialism is accordingly simply added to the other veto players. However, it is still unclear whether this leaves peculiarities of the presidential system out of account that could have an impact on the reality of political processes.

One such peculiarity is the focus of the executive on the president, which accompanies much greater personalisation of politics than in parliamentary systems. Another lies in a

follow-up problem of the separation of executive and legislature. As a result of the separation, the president has to rely on public opinion as a power resource. These two characteristics can lead to populism and to erraticness in presidential policy. On the other hand, they can enhance the legitimacy of the democratic regime if the interplay between the president and the public works. We need not settle this question here, but merely draw a general conclusion. In so far as these and other peculiarities of the presidential system play a role, it is inappropriate to consider presidentialism only as a veto player. It could be more useful to pursue a quite new typological approach that systematically links the differentiation into presidentialism and parliamentarism with the differentiation into systems that distribute power and those that concentrate power. First steps in this direction have been taken by, for example, Weaver and Rockman (1993) and Lijphart (1992). However, a theoretical criterion has yet to be found that permits the two dimensions to be linked systematically and not only voluntaristically.



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