Consensus Democracy as an Alternative Model in Korean Politics

Nam-Kook Kim

Abstract

This paper is a deontological justification of consensus democracy as an alternative model in Korean politics. Korea has experienced a crisis of representation marked by increasing exclusion of the voices of social minorities and a crisis of solidarity in which there is an absence of sufficient trust between social minorities and majorities. To solve these crises, this paper argues the need for a paradigm shift from majoritarian democracy to consensus democracy.

Majoritarian democracy does not work properly as Korean society has undergone various, new cleavages from below, resulting in a widening gap between winners and losers. In contrast, consensus democracy in the form of a parliamentary system, proportional representation, and federalism may be an alternative model that could resolve people's current discontent over Korean politics. However, many scholars criticize the inefficiency of consensus democracy based on consequentialist reasoning, which traces the result or effect of a certain policy in order to judge whether it is desirable or not. This paper argues against such criticism from the viewpoint of deontological reasoning in which a certain policy is supported as long as it bears its own value based on its capacity for normative rationalization.

Keywords: consensus democracy, majoritarian democracy, crisis of representation, crisis of solidarity, consequentialist reasoning, deontological reasoning

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Introduction: Discontent over Democracy after Democratization

As of the 2007 presidential election, Korea passed the "two turn-over test" in which the party that had lost power during the democratic transition seized power again, while the defeated ruling party agreed on a peaceful regime change.[1] Nobody denies that democracy has become the "only game in town"[2] and that elections have been the main method of fair competition in Korea. Korean democracy has surely entered the stage of consolidation based on the five conditions of free and active civil society, liberal and institutionalized political community, rule of law and constitutionalism, democratically controlled state bureaucracy, and a sociopolitically regulated market economy.[3]

Perhaps delegative democracy is the only concept used by the scholars who argue that Korea has not fully accomplished democracy.[4] In delegative democracy, administrative power is substantial to the extent that it can override a regular decision-making process of the legislature and judiciary. Accordingly, this concept is used when a problem occurs in the horizontal accountability among state institutions.[5] But recent developments during the President Roh administration removed such considerations from Korean politics. It is now difficult to say that administrative power and the power of the president are dominant in Korea. In other words, encroachment of an authoritarian foundation in recent years makes the concept of delegative democracy improper.[6]

1. Huntington (1991, 266-267).
2. Palma (1990).
3. Linz and Stephan (1996).
4. Croissant (2004, 156-178).
5. O' Donnell (1994, 55-69).
6. Nevertheless, the existence of the National Security Law, which restricts the freedom of speech in Korea, could be pointed out as a significant defect in Korean democracy. Comparative political scientists classify three more types of defective democracy: exclusive democracy, in which a part of the citizenry is basically excluded from all political processes; illiberal democracy, in which no actual change has taken place despite regular elections; and enclave democracy, in which a veto group is empowered with reversing decisions made through legitimate procedures.
7. Shin and Cho (2007).
8. Park S. (2006).

Given this brilliant achievement of formal and procedural democracy, people should be happy with the current stage of development. However, they still express discontent over Korean politics. Diverse diagnoses and prescriptions have been posed regarding the cause and solution of this discontent. The leftists point out how the neoliberal market economy deepens inequality and social polarization, and argue that the nature of Korean democracy can be improved by the presence of citizens who can control the market through voluntary participation in active social movements.[7] Meanwhile, rightists recognize the regulative power of the neoliberal order that emphasizes selective concentration and growth of disparity, and see that the present situation can be overcome by harmonizing individual liberty with community responsibility based on market economy.[8] Although the points emphasized by the two groups differ from each other, both assume that globalization is the principal environment that Korea must go through. They agree that the global era is defined by the international flow of capital and labor, deepening of polarization, and emergence of multicultural society.

One interesting point in these debates is that concerns for institutional reforms are weakening subsequently. The debates seem to suppose that the institutional aspect of the issue is no longer important in Korean society. Instead, they focus on a comprehensive social reform strategy for enhancing quality of life and respect for human rights in which the debates tend to become somewhat abstract. Though some interest in institutional reforms has been expressed, this interest is limited by such issues as the presidential term of service introduction of a vice-presidential system, or implementation of a run-off system. Of course, this type of institutional change could be a significant experiment for the maturity of Korean politics. However, I want to raise a more fundamental question about the relevance of the formal and procedural democracy that has been achieved in

Korea. In other words, I point out the limits of the established representative system as one source of people's discontent, especially its inability to tackle the crisis of representation and the crisis of solidarity that Korean politics has faced. The crisis of representation means increasing exclusion of the voices of social minorities; and the crisis of solidarity, an absence of sufficient trust between social minorities and majorities. As a solution, I argue for the need for a paradigm shift from a majoritarian democracy to consensus democracy.

In my opinion, a majoritarian democracy that seeks its justification in a simple majority does not work properly, as Korean society has experienced various, new cleavages from below. This results in a widened gap between winners and losers and shuts more people out of the political process. In contrast, a consensus democracy that seeks its justification from as many people as possible through power sharing can serve as an alternative solution to the people's current discontent. One may then ask whether such institutional reform could really solve people's discontent. In the following sections, I define the crisis of representation and solidarity, and connect them to people's discontent over politics over Korean politics. Then I compare majoritarian and consensus democracy from the viewpoint of their capacity to solve the current problems. I also suggest an approach to refuting the criticism against consensus democracy by distinguishing consequentialist reasoning from deontological reasoning. In the final section, I compare the major characteristics of President Lee's and President Roh's governments in terms of the elements of consensus democracy.[9]

9. The current controversy over amendment of the constitution in Korea has shown a different preference for the two types of democracy. According to a CBS (Christian Broadcasting System) poll conducted in August 2008, Korean citizens prefer majoritarian democracy to consensual democracy. 36.7% of respondents support a two-term presidential system; 20.1%, the current one-term tenure; 11.3%, the parliamentary system; and 9.6%, the French-style semi-presidential system. Although this poll shows a total 56.8% support rate for the presidential system, if we compare this poll to the December 2007 poll result, we can see decreasing support for the presidential system (5.4% ↓, 8.3% ↓) and increasing support for the parliamentary system (6.8% ↑) and semi-presidential system (3.6% ↑). Mainly aiming at changes in the form of government, those who support the presidential system argue for maintaining the current system with complementary measures such as run-off voting, running mate policy, maximum two-term tenures, and restriction of presidential power. They are pessimistic about the parliamentary system because of its instability due to coalition government, weak driving force, low level of inside party politics, and lack of political cultures of compromise in Korea (Chung T. 2008; *Joongang Ilbo*, May 29, 2008). In contrast, those who support the parliamentary system criticize the presidential system because of its highly centralized power, impossibility of stable expectations, winner-takes-all system, and reinforcement of regionalism. They insist that the parliamentary system is a more proper model to reduce conflict and division and to achieve social integration (Seon 2005; Chung J. 2008).

The Crisis of Representation and the Crisis of Solidarity

Interestingly enough, almost all major political changes that have marked the contemporary history of Korea took place outside the representative system. The April 1960 revolution, the military coup d'états in 1961 and 1979, the Spring of Seoul in 1980, the general strike in 1987, the Internet revolution during the presidential election in 2002, and the NGO campaign against corrupt candidates in the 2004 general election all occurred outside the framework of the representative system. This demonstrates that there have been some serious defects in the representative system in Korea, which is supposed to work with well-established political parties that aggregate the various interests of individuals and social groups.

The core aspect of the representative system is whether the will of the citizens are properly represented. Citizens articulate their own interests directly or through an interest group, and the political party aggregates those opinions and speaks for them through elected representatives. In this sense, the crisis of representation ultimately implies a crisis of party politics. The political party should be at the heart of the representative system. However, Korean political parties have not been able to properly reflect the conflicting interests of society in a changing environment. This situation can be better understood through comparison with the European case.

According to the Norwegian political scientist Stein Rokkan, each

European state underwent the formation of four cleavages in the transition to the stage of national community. During the formative period of the nation-state, a historical cleavage emerged between the center and periphery, and between state and religious factions. During the period of industrial revolution, conflicts between rural and urban areas, and capitalists and laborers were dominant. In Rokkan's view, the European conservative and progressive party system of the 1920s reflected these four cleavages and had still maintained its influence in the 1960s.[10] The argument's so-called freezing thesis illustrates that a party structure is formed prior to the voter's preference, which reflects social cleavage, and subsequently limits the appearance of an alternative party system influencing the voter's preference itself.

This explanation still holds relevance in explaining European politics. Past cleavages cast their shadow even to the present time and provide frames to regulate the current situation. Nevertheless, a new conflict is arising in Europe today, and it is also true that a new representative system reflecting that conflict is appearing as well. The nationalist party representing segregational regionalism, extreme rightist parties reflecting anti-immigration sentiments, and the green party advocating postmodern politics are examples of changing trends in the global era. These new political parties are expanding their influence both in local and central politics in Europe today.

Korea also experienced a similar freeze among political parties along previous lines of cleavage. As ideological conflicts intensified between North and South during the Korean War, a political freeze formed in both Koreas, with the rightist parties predominant in the South and leftist parties predominant in the North.[11] This freeze has maintained its influence in a political order that is focused on a narrow range of conservative power in South Korea. Accordingly, the representation of the leftist camp has not been sufficiently realized. The established system's strong power of mobilization and reproduction has also suppressed the emergence of new political parties. The influence of such unbalanced representation is not limited to the simple fact that the left is not represented, but brings about the consequence that all values and outlooks other than those endowed by the conservative power are not properly respected under the hegemony of the established system.

10. Lipset and Rokkan (1967).
11. Choi (2002).

The crisis of representation is deepening along with the nations shift toward a multicultural society. The nation-state composed of relatively homogeneous traditions comes to face the challenge of multiculturalism along with globalization, and in such a society, the number of cultural minority groups with no political right to represent themselves increases. Although the most important criterion dividing citizenship and denizenship is whether one possesses and makes use of his or her political rights, they will choose not to represent themselves through the political process, or even if they want representation, they are limited by a restrictive system. Those minorities will also pay indirect taxes to the political communities that they reside in, but most are not represented even though they definitely exist inside the communities. As a result, the number of persons marginalized from the political process continues to increase, which is not a desirable situation in terms of the principles of democracy, in which the voices of every member of society must be represented without exception.[12]

One can find an urgent call for the crisis of representation from Arend Lijphart's presidential speech delivered at the American Political Science Association in 1996. He pointed out the low voter turnout in the United States as a serious problem and suggested the introduction of a compulsory voting system as exists in Belgium and Australia. According to him, a low turnout of about 30 percent is one problem in local elections, but even worse is that the analysis of the voters shows that those who are socioeconomically well off wield a

12. The concepts of crisis of representation and crisis of solidarity had first been introduced in Kim (2005), and this essay further elaborates on those concepts in the Korean context, comparing them with cases in the United States and Europe.

strong influence in society. In other words, the voices of socioeconomic minorities are almost not reflected in the political process, suggesting a serious crisis of representation.[13] As Lijphart points out, voluntarily passive political participation is a dangerous development, but the gradual increase of groups who are denied their right of representation is a more deplorable phenomenon. This situation is getting worse where cultural minority groups and socioeconomic minorities overlap in their compositions.

Compared to the cases of Europe and the United States, Korea has experienced the deepening crisis of representation in three aspects. First, the crisis of party politics incapable of representing diverse ideologies and values in a narrow system of representation centered on conservative parties; second, the crisis of multiculturalism with increasing number of migrant workers and foreigners who are not represented in the political process;[14] and third, the crisis of low political participation that can be confirmed from the gradually decreasing voter turnout in the presidential and general elections.[15]

In a more fundamental dimension, the crisis of representation is closely related to the crisis of social solidarity, and the crisis of solidarity reinforces once again the crisis of representation. In other words, the social majority tends not to acknowledge the political rights of their new neighbors when it lacks sufficient trust in them, and the social minority that lacks representative rights has little opportunity to feel solidarity with the social majority. The crisis of representation is in fact closely related to the problem of changing the current system, but goes beyond that to the more fundamental problem of solving the crisis of social solidarity. Why then is social

13. Lijphard (1997, 1-14).
14. The total number of foreigners who have settled in Korea is about 1,060,000 or 2.2% of the total population of 48 million at the end of 2007. This number includes about 33,000 skilled workers, 440,000 unskilled migrant workers, 41,000 foreign students, and 110,000 foreign spouses from international marriages.
15. The exact turnouts are 89.2%, 81.9%, 80.7%, 70.8%, 62.9% in presidential elections between 1987 and 2007, and 84.6%, 75.8%, 71.9%, 63.9%, 57.2%, 60.6%, 48% in general elections between 1985 and 2008, respectively.

solidarity so important?

The democratic political process consists of two important elements: one is the principle of majoritarian rule; the other is the protection of minority rights. In order to solve the problem under the framework of the representative system in a peaceful way, the social majorities and minorities must agree on the principle of majoritarian rule and agree on the principle that social majorities will endeavor to protect the right of the minorities. When I give up my opinion according to the principle of majoritarian rule, two conditions are presumed in a normative sense. First, the decision-making rules are fair enough for everyone so that it is possible to expect that I can become the social majority some time in the future. No one can agree on a rule that makes him or herself a minority all the time and thus sacrifices him or herself throughout his or her life time. Second, there should be enough trust that the majority will endeavor to protect my interests even though I give up my opinion as a minority at the time. In other words, the fact that the principle of majoritarian rule and the protection of minority rights are accepted by all the members of the community signifies that fair rules have been agreed upon among them, and that there is enough social solidarity between minorities and majorities who are willing to make personal sacrifices to hold onto this agreement.[16]

However, to what extent do the leftists, socioeconomic minorities, and migrant workers in Korea have a sense of solidarity with and trust in the social majority when they give up their opinions? Do they actually have faith that they will some day become the social majority, and that the winning majority will try to protect their rights even if they give up their opinions? Moreover, do they think that each one of them should willingly sacrifice for the community because they trust in the fairness of the agreed-upon rules? Of course, the majority of Korean society may argue that the principle of majoritarian rule is widely accepted, and consequently, the minority should naturally give up even without such presumptions. But a society forc-

16. Kim (2004).

ing a mechanical renunciation without providing any acceptable ground for trusting the opinion of the majority cannot be a desirable community. After all, behind the crisis of social representation in fact lies a crisis of solidarity among members of the society.[17]

This crisis of social solidarity has come to face a harsher environment, especially given the transition to a multicultural society, since the cultural cleavage line has been added to the previous socioeconomic cleavage lines. One can then raise the question of whether different cultural identities really can influence the strength of social solidarity. To what extent are the rules compatible to citizens from different cultural backgrounds? Sometimes decision-making rules suggested by a member of another cultural group may not be accepted. Because the historical context and social standards used to establish those rules can differ from each other, it is obviously difficult for two citizens from different cultural backgrounds to find consensus in setting the goals of the political community they belong to as well as in finding a way to achieve them. They often have different concepts of individual liberty, social roles, and degrees of state intervention.

For instance, let us compare the different cultural backgrounds between citizens from a Christian background who have lived in Europe for a long time and Muslim citizens who came to Europe as immigrants. The common legacies binding Europe as a whole are

17. One more group that wants to be represented in Korean politics is overseas Koreans. With respect to political rights, ethnic Koreans who reside in foreign countries with Korean nationality can be considered positively since they have shared historical and cultural backgrounds. They are also important asset and resource for Korean development in the global era. Nevertheless, they are limited in the sense that they belong to different community where social justice and redistribution is operated with different principles. In other words, we can consider who should have priority between overseas Koreans who lodge their life basis in foreign countries paying tax to those countries and migrant workers who reside with us paying tax to Korea and are influenced directly by the government's decisions. In legal perspective, one may argue, voting right can be endowed for those who have Korean nationality in national elections, while migrant workers have right to vote in local elections. In fact, foreigners who have resided in Korea for over three years on a permanent visa can vote in local elections since the enactment of the 2004 Local Referendum Act and the 2005 Election Act for Public Servants.

generally said to be Greco-Roman traditions, the influence of the feudal system, and a shared belief in Christianity. Greek cultures emphasized the power of reason and participatory democracy, and Rome universalized citizenship in the republic and the rule of law. The feudal system of the Middle Ages gave way to the cultures of contract and devolution, and the Christian traditions have taught that human beings are equal before God.[18] In particular, the greatest achievement of the Western world, which embraces all these traditions, is surely the invention of the individual who has inviolable freedoms and the right to dignity. The concept of equal individuals that emerged in contemporary Europe has progressed with another modern achievement known as the separation of the public and private domain, and the separation of the secular and religious domain.

However, the principle of social formation in Islamic culture is different from that in European culture in terms of how individual status, social responsibility, and the degree of state intervention are defined. First of all, the individual is perceived to exist as a member of a family or a group in Islamic culture. The individual does not exist as a socially significant actor, and does not acquire identity without relating to a specific group. Individuals in Islamic culture acquire consensus and social value through being members of groups, and this consensus is formed through an authority from above and a horizontal procedure of advice. Decision making in Islamic culture, which puts weight on consensus and advice, differs from decision making in Europe, where competition among individuals and divergence of opinions are considered natural. Social goals in Islamic culture also lean toward promoting good and preventing evil in pursuit of moral abundance, rather than protecting individual liberties and chasing material wealth. Moreover, the Islamic state takes on a corporative character made up of tribes and the ruling class based on groups, and does not embrace a secular concept of state where politics and religion are separated as in Europe.[19]

18. Barnavi (2002, 87-94).
19. Cantori (2000); Kim (2004).

Considering these three levels of difference, it can be expected that citizens from heterogeneous cultural backgrounds living inside the same European borders will accept the principle of majoritarian rule and submit to individual sacrifice, but the low level of common identity and the level of social solidarity based on such weak identity is and will be a persistent challenge. After all, the problem of social solidarity in a multicultural society carries complex aspects going beyond socioeconomic cleavage, and further, beyond cultural differences.

Korean society is also not free from such challenges. However, this does not mean that Korea has experienced the same situation as Europe in terms of depth and breadth of multicultural challenges.[20] Having a minority population that makes up only two percent of the total population is not enough to justify mandatory transition toward consensus democracy. Nevertheless, we should pay attention to these marginal groups because, first, the inflow of racial, cultural, and religious minorities as a symbolic phenomenon of globalization is not reversible. Their numbers will continue to increase rapidly, and cannot be completely contained due to the labor shortage of receiving countries and superior status of capital that crosses national borders freely. Second, these groups act as a prism through which we can see changes happening to mainstream society, starting from the outermost margins. They are testing the modernity of Korean society in terms of its respect for universal human rights and operation of democratic principles. Accordingly, locating the principle of social formation in this multicultural society, which can be shared among minorities as well as majorities, is an important future agenda in Korea.

20. There are several similar concepts to social solidarity that I have used in this paper, such as Putnams's social capital, Fukuyama's trust, Barber's strong democracy, and Sandel's republican virtue. While they focus on citizens' voluntary virtue to recover trust in community, I rather emphasize the possibility of enhancing social solidarity by resolving the problem of representation under the assumption that citizens want to represent their own interest based on the fair rule of decision-making (Putnam 1995; Fukuyama 1996; Barber 2004; Sandel 1996).

Majoritarian Democracy and Consensus Democracy

What institutional alternative then could there be to solve the increasing problems of representation and social solidarity? There are mainly two ways to form a government and make decisions while reflecting the opinions of citizens with distinctive preferences. One is to respect the simple majority of the society and then make subsequent decisions; the other is to go beyond the aspect of simple majority to respect the preferences of as many people as possible, and therefore increase the legitimacy of the government's decision making. Lijphart calls the former majoritarian democracy and the latter consensus democracy.

In order to distinguish the two systems, Arend Lijphart suggests five characteristics focusing on the executive-parties dimension, and five other ones focusing on the federal-unitary dimension. To begin with majoritarian democracy, characteristics of the executive-parties dimension concern the case in which a single party dominates the composition of a government; the executive is dominant over the legislative; a two-party system is established; a plurality election system is adopted; and a pluralistic interest representation system is established. In the federal-unitary dimension, majoritarian democracy is characterized by centralized government in a unitary system, a single cameral system, possible revision of constitution by simple majority, the final authority of parliament to interpret the constitution, and a central bank dependent on government.

On the other hand, consensus democracy in the executive-parties dimension is characterized by cases in which a major party constitutes a coalition government; the executive is balanced with legislative and judiciary power; a multiparty system is established; a proportional representation system is adopted; and a corporatist interest representation system is established. In the federal-unitary dimension, consensus democracy has such characteristics as federal and decentralized government, bicameral legislature, a rigid constitution only amenable by specific majorities, judicial review under supreme or constitutional courts, and the existence of an independent central

bank.[21]

While the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Barbados are typical examples of majoritarian democracy, Belgium, Swtizerland, and the European Union are examples of countries that adopted consensus democracy. According to these criteria, Korea has partial characteristics of the consensus system. But its presidential system founded on simple majority, a single-party government constituted of one major party, the unicameral assembly based on the single-member plurality system, and the weakness of the proportional system are all elements pertaining to a predominantly majoritarian democracy in which the winner takes all the goods from the election.

Countries adopting a majoritarian democracy tend to have a relatively homogeneous culture and historical experience. In a relatively homogeneous society, people easily agree to the principle of majoritarian rule in respect to a nonviolent resolution of problems, and the simple majority basis simplifies the problem of representation as well. However, the principle of majoritarian rule under a majoritarian democracy sometimes stops at simply representing the largest minority of the society unlike what the theory postulates.[22] For example, during the five presidential elections held in Korea between 1987 and 2007, the winners were elected with 36.7%, 42%, 40.3%, 48.9%, and 48.7% support, respectively. Converting these numbers with the ratio of total enfranchised citizens, the candidates polled 32.7%, 34.4%, 32.5%, 34.6%, and 30.6% to win the presidential elections. When every candidate failed to win even the simple majority, the candidate who received the support of the largest minority among many minor groups was eventually elected.

On the other hand, countries adopting consensus democracy are characterized by diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural groups coexisting within one community. If a political community divides according to different standards and produces numerous minority groups with no chance of being represented, it would then be desirable to

21. Lijphart (1999, 3-4).
22. Lijphart (1999, 290).

switch from a majority democracy that postulates the simple majority principle, which assumes a homogeneous society, to a consensus democracy capable of representing the opinions of as many people as possible. Consensus democracy can contribute to the resolution of the crises of representation and solidarity in two aspects. First, consensus democracy can enhance the level of representation by incorporating social minorities, which were not properly represented in former times, into decision-making procedures. Second, consensus democracy can help solve the crisis of social solidarity by narrowing the gap between winners and losers through compromise and bargaining rather than the simple majority principle of "winner takes all."

The representative form of the consensus system or the so-called consociational democracy is based on four principles. The first principle regards the recognition of autonomy of diverse subsegments within the society; secondly, the representatives of the groups recognized in such a way form a government through grand coalition; thirdly, respecting the principle of proportionality vis-à-vis the size of the participatory groups as a principle of constituting a grand coalition; fourth and lastly, each group holding a mutual veto right. There are risks that all decision-making procedures cease due to this mutual veto right, but European experiences show that groups tended to administer governments through dialogue and compromise, rather than practicing the right of veto.[23]

Overall, a parliamentary system rather than a presidential system, a proportional representation system rather than a simple majority system, and a federal system rather than a unitary system is closer to a consensus democracy and is capable of reducing the gap between winners and losers.[24] If the proportional representation, the parliamentary system, and some strengthened local self-governments are all combined in Korea, a single major party shaped by regional cleavages could not exist, and eventually coalition in concert with other

23. Lijphart (1977).
24. Anderson and Christine (1997, 66-81).

parties will be inevitable. This shift in fundamental paradigm to a consensus democracy will help resolve the crises of representation and solidarity, which are generated by the increase in the number of socioeconomically weak citizens, as well as of cultural minorities unable to acquire political rights, and of passive citizens who give up on participation in political procedures.

Table 1 shows the distribution of parliamentary seats for each party in the 2004 general election. Diverse simulations according to proportional representation make the parties with a single majority disappear along with the diminution of seats of major parties, and increase the seats allotted to minor parties. It is also noticeable that the gap between winners and losers has ultimately diminished as cooperation among parties became inevitable under these changed circumstances. In this simulation, the total number of seats in the National Assembly is modified from 299 seats (including 243 local district seats and 56 proportional representation seats) to a total of 300 seats (composed of 200 local district seats and 100 proportional representation seats).

Among the three methods of proportional representation, the Korean model splits the vote in two, one electing a member of a local constituency with the single-member plurality system, and the other cast to the party list which is divided into four regional lists (such as the Seoul-Gyeonggi, Honam/Jeju, Gangwon/Chungcheong, and Yeongnam regions). The Japanese model is almost similar to the Korean one, but one major difference is that the number of proportional seats one party can obtain in a region is limited to two-thirds of the total allocated seats. The German model determines the number of seats according to the national polling score of each party, and recognizes the predominant number of seats that a party may obtain in one region. Therefore, the overall quota of members of the assembly is not fixed to 300 seats, but can increase.[25]

The support of each party at the 17th general election was rated

25. Park C. (2005).

Table 1. Number of Seats in Simulation of Diverse Proportional Representation Models

	17th General Election	Korean Model	Japanese Model	German Model
Uri Party	152	145	146	126
Grand National Party	121	119	120	115
Democratic Labor Party	10	17	16	41
Democratic Party	9	12	11	22

Source: Park C. (2005).

38.3% for the Uri Party, 35.7% for the Grand National party, 13.1% for the Democratic Labor's Party, and 7.1% for the Democratic Party. Assuming that the support rate for the Uri Party is approximately three times that for the Democratic Labor Party, the closest figure for parliamentary seat distribution to this ratio is the German proportional representation system. However, the results of the 17th general election show that the difference in number of seats between the Uri Party and the Democratic Labor Party reaches almost fifteen times. Evidently, the more an electoral system emphasizes fair representation, the easier it is to incline toward being a multiparty system or fragmentize, and thus make it difficult to produce a ruling party with a majority of the seats. Therefore, all electoral systems simultaneously take into consideration the aspect of governability along with the aspect of fair representation.

The Korean electoral system has overly emphasized the efficiency of governing without giving proper concern to acquiring proportionality in terms of the supporting rate and the number of seats. There have been multiple debates and civil movements arguing for the limits of such a representation system, but final legislative decisions have generally been made through compromise among monopolistic elites to the exclusion of civilians. The major incidents marking critical changes in Korean history were first initiated by the participation of citizens, but at their final stage, ended up solely being a compromise among existing political elites in representation of a nar-

row range of the conservative political party system.[26] This is probably one reason that previous reforms were not successful despite such a strong initiative by citizens at its first stage.

While the cleavage in Korean society is not yet at the stage of considering immediate implementation of European-style consociational democracy, the transition toward such a diverse society seems imminent. Particularly considering the eventual cleavage foreseen from North-South unification in the future, the situation keenly calls for the principle of consensus democracy. Korea has never encountered the national minority problems that other countries have had to face as groups were formed out of coercive annexation or conquest in the past, except for occasional claims from ethnic minorities who voluntary migrated to the country.

For example, Britain has national minorities that consist of Scot, Welsh, and Northern Irish, and ethnic minorities who migrated from Southeast Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Caribbean countries such as Jamaica and Bahamas. The demands of such migrants differ as much as their distinctive historical backgrounds. Ethnic minorities wish to participate in mainstream society in every political, economic, social aspect and call for multiculturalism in order to preserve their cultural identity; but national minorities, in addition to the right of multiculturalism, claim the right to represent their group as well as their own government in the territory in which they reside.

In Korean politics, there is a great chance that North Korea will take on the role of national minority after unification of North and South Korea. If North Korea comes to exist as a clearly distinctive social minority in terms of geographical, demographical, and economic conditions, the current framework of majoritarian democracy will only function as a mechanism of aggravating the isolation of North Koreans within Korean society.[27]

If we assume a majoritarian democracy founded on a homogeneous society as a linear equation, consensus democracy is more an equation of higher degree. That is, complicated problems generated from a diversifying social structure should be solved through a more advanced and complex system. With the aggravation of many presumable cleavages including socioeconomic and cultural ones, as well as those between two Koreas, it is difficult to organize a greater discourse that would satisfy all social groups. Consequently, political procedures in a multicultural society show high possibilities of becoming a monotonous routine of giving and taking profits by means of dialogue and compromise. It is now necessary to gradually adjust ourselves to multicultural political conditions, in which the illusion that a single election or a single great politician can solve everything has faded away. The development of such comportment enlarges the number of losers by ensuring the predominance of winners over the largest minor group, and it is difficult to solve such situations with the principle of majoritation democracy that tends to widen the gap between winner and loser.

Counterargument to the Criticism of Consensus Democracy

Despite the merits of consensus democracy, people do not always support the idea of consensus democracy. Criticisms of consensus democracy have generally taken a consequentialist position, which means tracing the effect of a certain policy or system to judge whether they are desirable or not. In other words, critics argue that advocating for the superiority of consensus democracy became the ideology of the Lijphart School and is supported regardless of the influence this system actually bears on democracy. Accordingly, they seek to track down tangible results of consensus democracy applied in reality.

Typical criticisms regarding consensus democracy can be summarized into four points. The first point argues that consensus democracy is undemocratic; that is, distortion can be made arbitrarily while seeking compromise among groups that aim to ensure minority representation. The accountability of parliamentary politics may con-

26. Park M. (2005).
27. Kim (2007).

sequently weaken according to this argument. Second, consensus democracy is inefficient; decision-making procedures in the process of seeking consensus would take more time than customary, and competitiveness will decline while the act of compromising will constrain the autonomy of the government.[28] Thirdly, conflicts and violence would rather increase and accentuate the separation between social minority and majority. To illustrate this argument, scholars present the cases of Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Cyprus, and Nigeria, which failed in their attempt to establish a consensus system.[29] The fourth point is that citizens do not always prefer consensus democracy. That is, while showing a favorable position toward "democracy as principle," citizens tend to show less support for "democracy in practice," or even respond negatively when it comes to defining the correlation between democracy and a parliamentary system or a proportional representative system or devolution of power to local authority.[30]

In regards to this criticism, let us start with the argument that considers consensus democracy as undemocratic. True, the consensus system, involving the maximum number of representatives through dialogue and negotiation, shows less lucidity than the majoritarian democracy in terms of immediacy or accountability of representation. However, it seems difficult to agree on the criticism that the process of resolving the crisis of representation and the crisis of solidarity by enlarging the range of support through negotiation is undemocratic simply because it forsakes lucidity or immediate accountability. Justice does not uniquely consider the interests of social minorities, but justice excluding the needs of the minority is incomplete. Moreover, democracy is not a single kind. In addition to majoritarian democracy, democracy can be diversified into concrete forms of practice in the process of harmonizing the dilemmas between fair representation and governability, and between social

28. Seon (2006).
29. Horowitz (2000, 253-284).
30. Hong (2006, 25-46).

equality and economic efficiency.

For example, the United Kingdom realized devolution of power by attributing Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland an autonomous parliament with different levels of authority and status. In terms of equality, such devolution is incomprehensibly asymmetric. So, egalitarians argue that England must also have the same Parliament as three other regions. In refuting those egalitarians, Archie Brown once said: "Politics is not mathematics or logics. Leave mathematics and logics in the hands of mathematicians and logicians."[31] It might be right to attribute the same autonomous parliament to England from the viewpoint of equality, but democracy is not all about achieving the one explicit principle of equality. There may be other important values, and thus a compromised way to respect such values. If the same autonomous parliament was attributed to England, its size and power constituting eighty percent of the British population would actually dominate the British Parliament and fade the meaning of devolution. Accordingly, the conclusion of the Blair government was the unique figure of British asymmetrical devolution. Nobody says this is undemocratic. In other words, democracy does not always mean the principle of lucidity or immediate accountability as critics of consensus democracy argue, and sacrificing the principle of lucidity or immediate accountability does not always mean being undemocratic.

Second, the argument of inefficiency mostly stands in the realm of governability rather than fair representation, and in the realm of economic efficiency than social equality. Majoritarian democracy based on a single-member plurality system often creates a "manufactured majority" or a "working majority" and increases the efficiency of governing. A majoritarian society requires rapid decision-making and autonomous government, but doubts still remain over whether such aspects shall ultimately be seen as efficient. That is, if consensus democracy contributes to social integration by institutionalizing the uncertainty of class, regional, religious conflicts and thus making

31. Brown (1998, 215-223).

them controllable, and ultimately makes efficient policy implementation, it is then difficult to distinguish which one would be more efficient between the two. The fastest procedure is not always the most efficient. Sometimes we can save efficiency through time consuming negotiations for fair representation and social equality. Furthermore, Lijphart argues that nations adopting consensus democracy show better results when analyzing the macroeconomic index of economic development, political participation of women, and the quality of democracy.[32] So, in addition to fair representation and social equality, consensus democracy is required for achieving economic efficiency and governability.

The third criticism states that the consensus system accentuates conflicts and violence and rather widens the gap between minority and majority. This criticism actually portrays the dilemma of recognition of multiculturalism and emphasis on assimilation. Multiculturalism acknowledges the fact that inequality in a society can rely not only on the socioeconomic factor, but also on different cultural identities. Accordingly, it recognizes the cultural right of social minorities in the public domain, and affirmative policies are sometimes adopted in order to actively support their right in the community. On the other hand, assimilationists claim that even though citizens from diverse cultural backgrounds coexist in the same community, the equal treatment of majority and minority based on a common principle that everyone must comply with brings better results of social integration. Recognition of the difference of culture could lead to a dark period like the Middle Ages, which was torn apart by religious and ethnic wars. Since the integration principle suggested by assimilationists is generally more advantageous for the social majority, multiculturalists evidently argue that the results produced by such a principle threaten the existence of cultural minorities.

From a theoretical viewpoint, both arguments are founded on their own justifiable grounds, but the real outcome can differ according to the historical context of the political community in question.

32. Lijphart (1999, chs. 15-16, 258-300).

For instance, a society that is homogeneous in every aspect would not need to opt for multiculturalism, thus consensus democracy. Of course, with the current of globalization, it is difficult to find a purely homogeneous society in any part of the world. Also, despite having multicultural environments in common, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom show many differences in their respective policies. Policy that succeeds in one country may not be successful in another country. Consensus democracy has successfully mitigated conflict and violence in Switzerland and the European Union, but may fail in Lebanon, a country that lacks experience with cultural compromise among political elites. However, such failure in no way denies the total value of consensus democracy. If we simply see the result of the policy, we can suggest both successful and unsuccessful cases. Therefore, one cannot argue unilaterally whether this policy is good or bad. In other words, consensus democracy is not inherently superior to majoritarian democracy. Its needs and effects depend on the social and historical context in each country. If a society experiences various cleavages along increasing cultural differences, it may adopt consensus democracy.

The fourth criticism argues that a common hypothesis which assumes a higher level of support for democracy in a more consensus friendly society in fact differs from the reality that there are diverse subtypes of support for democracy. To elaborate, citizens in a consensus democracy indeed show greater support in terms of “democracy in principle,” but the results change when “democracy in practice” is broken down into different categories. When examining democracy in practice under multiple subcategories (such as support for working abilities, support for the system, and support for public servants) in relation to the elements of consensus democracy, support from citizens is not always higher than it used to be at the time of majoritarian democracy. This criticism, based on a large N study of thirty-nine countries collected via the World Bank or the World Value Survey, shows the typical limits of a consequentialist approach. Consequentialist reasoning supports a certain policy or system because the effects this policy or system will bring are believed to be desir-

able. An opposite approach to this is deontological reasoning, which stipulates that a certain policy or system is supported because it bears its value of normative rationalization.[33]

It is difficult to justify one given system according to the results of its practice. The first reason is that, it is hard to draw a linear demarcation between the net effects and the partial effects generated by the introduction of this system. In the simulation, other parameters except the new system were controllable *ceteris paribus*, but such attempt is almost useless in reality. A system influences the preference of citizens along with other parameters, and the level of expectation and evaluation of citizens vary with the complex results drawn from the introduction of the system. Second, short-term and long-term consequences following the introduction of the system can differ. It cannot be assumed that a consequence shown at a certain stage will sustain itself for an extended period of time, and a long-term consequence also cannot be seen as an accumulation of short-term consequences. Third, it is not easy to distinguish transitional effects from steady effects; in other words, it is hard to know whether an effect appearing after the introduction of a system will vanish after some time or will continue in the future.

Although it is hard to assess a system based on its outcome, one logic justifying such a method is to deny all rationality of its own and argue that this attempt has been initiated without any certainty of the rationality of the system when introducing it in the first place, and that all assessments should be done after obtaining some results. Almost every criticism of consensus democracy adopts consequentialist reasoning that bears these limitations in itself, and Lijphart is no exception in this respect. Lijphart himself starts by analyzing the macroeconomic index of economic development, political participation of women, and the quality of democracy of thirty-six nations; from his observation of the better results of consensus democracy, he develops his argument that consensus democracy is superior. However, the argument that consensus democracy brings better results in

33. Kay (2003).

every nation and thus should be implemented is no more a debatable scholarly discovery, but a set of ideology and dogma. Even in the framework of consensus democracy, it is not easy to assess its effects and results may differ from time to time and from country to country.

In contrast, deontological reasoning seeks to justify certain policies from the viewpoint of the values and principles it pursues. From a deontological perspective, the justification of consensus democracy is to solve the crises of representation and solidarity, thus making it appropriate for consolidating democracy in a multicultural society. The important values here are fairness of representation and enhancement of social equality, and in the reality of Korea in which social minorities who are structurally unrepresented in the decision-making process are raising the esteem of consensual democracy.

Evidently, results are significant in the deontological viewpoint, too. But a more fundamental importance lies in exploring diverse forms of practice rather than denying the value of the system itself. For example, devolution of power to the local level is worthwhile since it enhances citizens' controlling power over the decision-making process that impacts their everyday life. If devolution can be justified as a valuable policy through such deontological reasoning, even though citizens' evaluation or policy results obtained at a particular point of time are negative, it is right to look for another practicable way to bring better operation of devolution rather than giving up devolution itself. To put it in a more extreme way, if we follow deontological reasoning, military coups cannot be justified although they may drive economic development. In the same vein, Japanese imperial rule cannot be justified although it may lead to modernization.

The comprehensive representation advocated by consensus democracy signifies the importance of political rights. All citizens should possess political rights and participate in the decision-making process, thus representing themselves in the political community. Regarding the political right of representation as a value in itself, a system aiming to enhance the level of representation cannot be simply given up because a certain policy may produce negative results at a particular period of time. Then, why are political rights important

regardless of the results obtained? One reason is that the achievement of economic profits, one of the most desirable results, is possible outside the framework of democracy. There are countries that succeeded in continuously producing economic profits for a considerable period of time even under an authoritarian regime. However, we do not call such countries ideal political communities. It is very risky to defend a system based upon the continuous provision of economic benefits, feasible without active participation of citizens possessing political rights.

Another reason is that economic benefits or social welfare as a result of arbitrary benevolence without democracy can at any time be retracted without the consent of citizens when economic regression persists. In this case, social minorities are influenced in the first place. In a political community founded on wide participation of citizens, social solidarity among citizens does not collapse merely due to economic gain or loss. However, a community undergoing a crisis of representation and a crisis of solidarity will soon collapse when it cannot provide economic benefits. A consequentialist approach judging whether a policy or system can be justified based solely on its effects may easily lead to a self-contradicting situation like this. Ultimately, the consequentialist criticism against consensus democracy can be refuted through a deontological perspective. Consensus democracy is in fact worth support because it is a valuable system by itself in regard to resolving the problems of representation and solidarity in a society that experiences increasing multicultural diversity.

Conclusion: Toward a New System of Representation and Solidarity

The distinction of the four types of defective democracy such as delegative, illiberal, exclusive, and enclave, focuses on both vertical responsibility, judging whether state power is properly being controlled by the citizens, and horizontal responsibility, accounting for whether checks and balances among state institutions are being handled well. However, even if the two criteria are met, the possibility of democratic deficit prevails from a normative perspective. If there were not enough common identity as well as social solidarity among citizens supporting the representative system, it would not be possible to assert that democracy is functioning properly simply because there is a representative system.

For example, the current situation of Korean democracy in which elections are held on a regular basis and the principle of majoritarian rule is peacefully executed is certainly a great advancement, but Korea would still experience democratic deficit if the number of unrepresented social minorities increased and if citizens in the community lacked the trust to voluntarily sacrifice their opinions. Unfortunately, however, Korean democracy has not shown enough attention to the crisis of representation and the crisis of solidarity despite the historical experience of a democratic deficit.

Instead, Korean democracy has often taken the route of the statist shortcut, that is, a state system is first planned by elites from above, is then followed by the creation of a constitution, and finally ends with the advent of citizens justifying all these political procedures. This is a reversal of the normative viewpoint in which a consequentialist reasoning based on efficiency is predominant. Strong democracy has nothing to do with politics concocted by elites, but is supposed to mean politics fostered among citizens themselves. Of course, elite planning and voluntary participation can be compatible, but the emphasis is always placed on voluntary participation. So, the proper order should be to first collect the opinions of the citizens, then form the constitution based on their views, and finally create the state institution.

Otherwise, there would always be the possibility for a crisis of representation and crisis of solidarity, which makes a democratic deficit inevitable. In this regard, consensus democracy has direct democratic elements that complement the limits of the existing representation system by enhancing the voluntary participation of citizens. It narrows the gap between winner and loser by widening the range of representations and ultimately resolving the crisis of solidarity. There-

fore, it has strong potential to become an alternative model for current Korean politics. If consensus democracy can be justified as a better alternative in Korea from a deontological perspective, it can also be assumed that diverse subsegmental experiences can be carried out to realize consensual democracy. The consociational stage, giving mutual veto rights to social groups, would be at issue according to the development of cleavages in Korean society. However, foreseeing the aftermath of North-South unification, mutual veto rights or consociational democracy may become reality sooner than we expect.

Nevertheless, those who argue against consensus democracy find strong ground for their arguments in the high cost of transition based on political, circumstantial, and economic variables. This consequentialist argument is still persuasive in Korean society, and thus it is not easy to enhance considerably the support rate for consensus democracy. For example, a poll conducted by *Sisa Journal* in June 2008 confirms the situation in Korea in which 53.4% of the members of the 18th National Assembly support the two-term tenure presidential system, 25% the parliamentary system, and 6.9% the French semi-presidential system. Given this dominant preference for a presidential system, some scholars and politicians suggest the French semi-presidential system as a bridge toward a parliamentary system. Scholars Hwang Taeyeon and Kim Manheum and politicians Lee Mansup and Kim Jinpyo represent this position. They believe such a transition period will reduce the costs entailed in acclimating to a political culture of compromise and coordination. In other words, it would be desirable to shift from a predominantly majoritarian democracy to a moderate majoritarian democracy, and turn once more toward a centripetal consensus democracy. Consensus democracy as a system, policy, and culture needs a corresponding social atmosphere in advance, but sometimes institutional reform can cultivate a political culture that supports consensus democracy in reverse.

One interesting event related to Korea's experiment toward consensus democracy would be the suggestion of a grand coalition by President Roh Moo-hyun in the summer of 2005. This suggestion did not receive favorable attention from either the ruling party or the opposition party and soon faded away from public interest. But this suggestion was important in the sense that it tried to change the framework of Korean politics in which minor powers have little chance for representation, especially due to regional structures under a majoritarian democracy. The major achievements of the Roh government lay in his attempt to break with conventional habits and the preexisting structure of a majority-oriented society. His attempt was founded on deontological reasoning in which the transition toward consensus democracy is desirable since policy is valuable on its own regardless of the results or response from citizens.

Evidently, President Roh could not achieve his original aim because of his attempts to institute them from above, despite his proper recognition of the need for consensus democracy. We can then call President Roh a Balkan-style president who was destined to dismantle and destroy the negative tradition of winner-takes-all politics. History sometimes needs such a Balkan-style president. So, criticisms may be legitimately addressed to the former president not being able to accomplish his given role that should have destroyed such negative conventions more consistently. Ironically, President Roh was said to have ultimately obstructed the development of a consensual political culture as a condition for the success of consensus democracy by aggravating conflicts and disruption in the society.

On the other hand, the Lee Myung-bak government's pragmatism relies on a consequentialist reasoning that insists on the importance of economic growth. He seduces the public with the idea that, by sharing profits from economic growth, all citizens can become cozy consumers. However, economic profit is more of a relative concept. Even if greater material profits are returned to citizens, should polarization aggravate at the same time and people feel relative deprivation vis-à-vis the well-offs, citizens would not be rid of their discontent. Moreover, neoliberalism widens the gap between winners and losers through concentration of economic power and growth of disparity. Neoliberalists argue that losers will also benefit from the economic profits created by the winners, but this is only a myth that neoliberalism will ensure greater growth. Under neoliberalism, com-

panies worry about M&A and keep investment funds in their reserve; citizens worry about being discharged from work and save larger amounts of money while reducing consumption. Low investment and low consumption bring about low growth, and low growth means less creation of employment opportunities. In other words, it leads to a vicious circle that negates the neoliberalists' claims that a cozy consumer society will emerge out of thin air.

While neoliberalism assumes the winner-takes-all reasoning as self-evident, pragmatism underestimates the importance of discourse on the values of democracy, and is thus indifferent to the crisis of representation and the crisis of solidarity. In this context, consensus democracy as an alternative model for Korean politics is desperately needed as a way to increase social solidarity among political leftists, cultural minorities, and passive citizens, and further to draw them into the representation system beyond the conservative-dominated majoritarian democracy. Despite multiple criticisms based on consequentialist reasoning, consensus democracy is a policy and system worthy of trial for the consolidation of democracy in Korea.

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