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Non-democratic Consociational Parties

Introduction

The very existence of consociational parties in non-democracies may be doubted due to the powerful constraints that the authoritarian regime logic of power concentration puts on representation and accommodation. Brooker (2000) mentions Kenya as an example of a “party dictatorship”. Linz (2000) discusses Communist Yugoslavia in the section on “post-totalitarian authoritarian regimes”. This notwithstanding, observers have pointed out elements of socio-cultural representation and accommodation inside one-party states and these claims deserve to be scrutinized. Two types of non-democratic consociational parties have been identified and selected for further analysis: the single party (KANU in Kenya) and the League Model (the Yugoslav Communist Party).

Consociational parties in the Alliance and the Congress model are embedded in a structure of competitive multi-party elections. In Africa, “consensus democracy” has been promoted as an allegedly indigenous alternative to multi-party or “majority” democracy. For it to function, it requires that the borders of political units closely follow those of ethnic groups, that each (sub)unit is equally represented in the government, and that decisions are taken by consensus (Uyanne, 1997). This ideal of territorial representation plus consensus as a decision rule is seen as compatible with a one-party state (Nursey-Bray, 1983). To some, the presence of a multi-party system even detracts from the comprehensiveness of the consociational party.
The ultimate consociational party would then be the single party. Sylla’s (1982) juxtaposition of majoritarian democracy and consociational democracy as practiced in the one-party states of Tanzania and Ivory Coast comes close to such an understanding. As does Crook’s (1997: 217) view of the single party of the Ivory Coast and others as “an authoritarian version of consensus or consociational democracy”. The early literature on the crucial contribution of the party of national integration (see, e.g., Emerson, 1966) to nation building in new states would appear to support such an interpretation.¹

In contrast, it will be argued here that the non-democratic consociational party is the least consociational of all types, except for the rainbow party, and that there are good reasons for expecting this outcome. This chapter will discuss the experiences of the single party in Kenya from independence until the return to multi-party politics in 1992 and the Yugoslav Communist party from the new constitution of 1974 until the violent dissolution of Yugoslavia in 1991. It will verify to what extent these non-democratic ruling parties were consociational and highlight how deviations from the model provide information about the nature of ethnic politics in an authoritarian regime.

Kenya

The most extensive and explicit analysis of consociationalism in the context of the African one-party state is offered by Berg-Schlosser (1985) in his analysis of Kenya. From 1964 to 1992 Kenya was a de facto, and later a de jure, single-party state. Berg-Schlosser (1985), who classified Kenya as a consociational democracy, “although a special and somewhat limited version” (p. 107), writes that “all cabinets have consisted of an (admittedly somewhat lopsided) ‘grand coalition’ of representatives of all ethnic groups” (p. 100). Recruitment of members of parliament and the cabinet occurs through a single-party organization, with due consideration paid to the ethnic origin of candidates. Representation extends to the district level, through an elaborate system of “assistant ministers”.

Berg-Schlosser also identifies the other three consociational elements in Kenya. Proportionality is achieved through plurality elections in single-member districts that follow settlement patterns