

## Normative Models of Democratic Governance: Decentralism, Centralism, and Centripetalism

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## **ABSTRACT**

Why are some democratic nations better governed than others? What kind of institutions promote better social outcomes? This paper outlines two normative models of democratic governance, decentralism and centralism. It then proposes an alternative model, centripetalism, which proposes that good democratic governance arises from institutions that successfully meld two goals: authority and inclusion. Democratic institutions work best when they bring together a wide array of diverse interests into a single locus of effective authority. In practical terms, we suggest that unitarism, parliamentarism and proportional representation together promote these goals. An empirical test of the impact of a variable combining historical measures of these three institutions on six indicators of governance across the world suggests that centripetal institutions promote good governance.

*Plurality which does not reduce itself to unity, is confusion. Unity which is not the result of plurality, is tyranny.*

— Pascal<sup>1</sup>

*Of the many analogies that have been remarked between Law in the Physical and Law in the Moral World, none is more familiar than that derived from the Newtonian astronomy, which shows us two forces always operative in our solar system. One force draws the planets towards the sun as the centre of the system, the other disposes them to fly off from it into space. So in politics, we may call the tendency which draws men or groups of men together into one organized community and keeps them there a Centripetal force, and that which makes men, or groups, break away and disperse, a Centrifugal. A political Constitution or frame of government, as the complex totality of laws embodying the principles and rules whereby the community is organized, governed, and held together, is exposed to the action of both these forces. The centripetal forces strengthens it, by inducing men (or groups of men) to maintain, and even to tighten, the bonds by which the members of the community are gathered into one organized body. The centrifugal assails it, by dragging men (or groups) apart, so that the bonds of connexion are strained, and possibly at last loosened or broken. . . Accordingly, the history of every community and every constitution may be regarded as a struggle between the action of these two forces, that which draws together and that which pushes apart, that which unites and that which dissevers.*

— James Bryce<sup>2</sup>

What is the best way to organize a representative democracy? How should democracies be designed? Historically, the question of how to organize a representative democracy could be conceptualized only once there came to be such a thing as representative government. Thus, it is not surprising to find that the intellectual history of this question is coeval with the birth of constitutional government within nation-states, i.e., in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and with the histories of the western democracies (primarily England, France, and the United States).

Since that time, work on the subject of democratic governance has oscillated between two ideal-types, a *decentralist* paradigm and a *centralist* paradigm. According to the first, good government arises from institutions that are diffuse and decentralized, where multiple veto points check the accrual of power in any single source. According to the second, good government arises (within a democratic framework) wherever power is effectively centralized in the hands of a single party, thus establishing a system of effective accountability at all levels of government.

We begin by reviewing the history and arguments associated with these influential models of governance. However, our primary purpose is to introduce a third model of democratic governance, one that combines features of the previous types but which is, in logic and in associated institutions, distinct. This model, dubbed *centripetal*, proposes that good governance within a democratic framework arises from institutions that successfully meld two goals, *authority* and *inclusion*. Specifically, political

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<sup>1</sup> *Pensee* #870 (Pascal 1958: 261).

institutions should work best when they maximize centralized authority and the inclusion of diverse interests, ideas, and identities.

The remainder of this section briefly outlines the intellectual lineage and principal arguments of the decentralist and centralist paradigms. It then puts forth our alternative model, centripetalism, and compares it to the two predominant modes of thought both conceptually and institutionally. The second section of the paper discusses centripetalism as an empirical concept, focusing on three specific political institutions: unitarism, parliamentarism, and proportional representation. The final section of the paper provides a brief empirical test of the effects of centripetal institutions on a variety of governance outcomes across the world.

## **DECENTRALISM**

At the present time, theories of democratic governance are mostly decentralist in nature. The general assumption on the Right and the Left is that government works best when political institutions diffuse power broadly among multiple, independent bodies. This is the model of good government embraced by most lay citizens (at least in democratic countries), political scientists, NGOs, and international organizations. It is the reigning paradigm of governance at the outset of the twenty-first century.

The decentralist paradigm is by no means new. In western thought, the idea may be traced back to early attempts to constrain the abuse of political authority. Commonly cited exemplars include Greece and Rome in the classical age and the Italian, Swiss, and Dutch polities in the early modern era.<sup>3</sup> But the theory of decentralism was not, as yet, fully formed. As a selfconscious and fully articulated theory of governance, decentralism owes its origins to developments within the English polity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The English Revolution, in particular, played a formative role. In the wake of this shocking event, a cavalcade of scribblers and activists including William Blackstone, Lord Bolingbroke, Major Cartwright, Edward Coke, William Godwin, Charles Grey, John Hardy, James Harrington, John Locke, John Milton, Robert Molesworth, Joseph Priestley, Algernon Sidney, and John Trenchard — collectively referred to as the Old Whig, Country, Commonwealth, or Dissenting traditions — formulated various facets of the decentralist model.<sup>4</sup> It was the English state, as a matter of fact and a matter of principle, that supplied a primary touchstone for these writers — even those, like Montesquieu and Rousseau, who resided abroad.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Bryce (1905: 96-7).

<sup>3</sup> Gordon (1999).

<sup>4</sup> Brewer (1976), Foord (1964), Gunn (1969), Kramnick (1968b), Robbins (1959/1968), Vile (1967/1998).

<sup>5</sup> In principle, these writers were largely agreed. But there was some considerable difference of opinion as to how principle matched up with reality. Many of the aforementioned authors were highly critical of the actual workings of English government in the post-Revolutionary era. The dominance of the Crown and of the ‘Court’ party was thought to compromise the formal principles of balance, separation, and member independence. It was alleged by these writers that the Commons was controlled by corrupt factions, which extended royal munificence to those who obligingly supported its policies on the floor of the Commons, and whose insidious influence threatened to upset the

All this began to change after the American Revolution, a revolution motivated by Old Whig principles.<sup>6</sup> As the British polity became increasingly centralized a new polity appeared that embodied the decentralist ideal in a much more explicit fashion. The US Constitution wrote decentralist principles into the country's fundamental law, and the Federalist Papers provided an interpretive catechism to accompany that law. If ever a country was founded self-consciously according to the decentralist ideal, that country was the United States. Thus, over the past two centuries when we speak of decentralist political institutions we are usually referring to the institutions and the example of the United States.<sup>7</sup>

Among Old Whigs perhaps the most revered writer of all was William Blackstone, whose *Commentaries on the Laws of England* educated generations of British jurists. Blackstone's interpretation of the English constitution would endure for several centuries (until Bagehot's *English Constitution*, discussed below). The key feature of this interpretation was the 'mixed' constitution, an idea derived from Aristotle. Blackstone explains:

The legislature of the kingdom is entrusted to three distinct powers entirely independent of each other, first, the King; secondly, the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, which is an aristocratical assembly of persons selected for their piety, their birth, their wisdom, their valour, or their property; and thirdly, the House of Commons, freely chosen by the people from among themselves, which makes it a kind of democracy; as this aggregate body, actuated by different springs, and attentive to different interests, composes the British Parliament, and has the supreme disposal of every thing; there can no inconvenience be attempted by either of the three branches, but will be withstood by one of the other two; each branch being armed with a negative power sufficient to repel any innovation which it shall think inexpedient or dangerous.<sup>8</sup>

The theory of the mixed constitution, with all its parts in balance, was said to extend back to Anglo-Saxon England.<sup>9</sup>

This notion led directly to the theory of the separation of powers, as articulated initially by Montesquieu and later by Madison.<sup>10</sup> "The great security against a gradual concentration of the several powers in the same department, consists in giving to those who administer each department the necessary constitutional means and personal motives to resist encroachments of the others..." writes Madison in Federalist #51. "Ambition must be made to counteract ambition... In republican

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delicate balance of center and periphery.

<sup>6</sup> Bailyn (1967; 1968), Pocock (1975), Pole (1966), Shalhope (1972; 1982), Wood (1969).

<sup>7</sup> Switzerland, along with *pre-modern* polities in England, the Netherlands, and Northern Italy, are also occasional reference points.

<sup>8</sup> Blackstone (1862: 36).

<sup>9</sup> Pocock (1957/1987).

<sup>10</sup> "When the legislative and executive powers are united in the same person, or in the same body of magistracy, there can be then no liberty; because apprehensions may arise, lest the same monarch or senate should enact tyrannical laws, to execute them in a tyrannical manner. Again, there is no liberty, if the power of judging be not separated from the legislative and executive powers. Were it joined with the legislative, the life and liberty of the subject would be exposed to arbitrary control; for the judge would be then the legislator. Were it joined to the executive power, the judge might behave with all the violence of an oppressor" (Montesquieu, quoted in Casper 1989: 214).

government, the legislative authority necessarily predominates. The remedy for this inconveniency is to divide the legislature into different branches; and to render them, by different modes of election and different principles of action, as little connected with each other as the nature of their common functions and their common dependence on society will admit.”<sup>11</sup> Putting together the work of Montesquieu, Madison, and countless other constitutionalists from the eighteenth century to the present, M.J. Vile arrives at what he calls a ‘pure doctrine’ of separate powers.

It is essential for the establishment and maintenance of political liberty that the government be divided into three branches or departments, the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary. To each of these three branches there is a corresponding identifiable function of government, legislative, executive, or judicial. Each branch of the government must be confined to the exercise of its own function and not allowed to encroach upon the functions of the other branches. Furthermore, the persons who compose these three agencies of government must be kept separate and distinct, no individual being allowed to be at the same time a member of more than one branch. In this way each of the branches will be a check to the others and no single group of people will be able to control the machinery of the State.<sup>12</sup>

Separate powers thus refers to the diffusion of power at national levels (or indeed at any single level of government).

Federalism, a second critical theoretical component of decentralism, refers to the diffusion of power *between* levels of government. Federalism, like separate powers, is an ancient idea. Broadly interpreted, the federal idea may be traced back to city-state confederations in classical Greece, the medieval Hanseatic league, and the equally venerable Swiss confederation. If we take a more restrictive view of what it means to be federal, the arrival of this form of government has a fairly precise date: the founding of the American republic. Indeed, the United States was the first polity to invoke federalism as an explicit theory of governance. As a general definition, William Riker’s well-traveled statement will serve. “A constitution is federal,” writes Riker, “if 1) two levels of government rule the same land and people, and 2) each level has at least one area of action in which it is autonomous, and 3) there is some guarantee (even though merely a statement in the constitution) of the autonomy of each government in its own sphere.”<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the theory of decentralism has two fundamental axioms, one pertaining to divisions at the national level (separate powers) and the other pertaining to divisions between national and subnational levels (federalism). Both are enshrined in the US Constitution. Potentially, the theory of decentralism extends to other political institutions as well, a matter we shall shortly explore.

In the lineage of decentralism, and in present-day practice, one finds two quite different perspectives on the virtues of decentralization. The dominant strand, including Blackstone,

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<sup>11</sup> Madison, Federalist #51 (Hamilton et al. 1787-88/1992: 266-67).

<sup>12</sup> Vile (1967/1998: 14). See also Brennan and Hamlin (1994), Gwyn (1965), Marshall (1971: 100), Tomkins (2001).

<sup>13</sup> Riker (1964: 11). On the theory and intellectual history of federalism see also Beer (1993), Davis (1978),

Montesquieu and Madison, sees in decentralized institutions a mechanism to prevent direct popular rule, or at least to moderate its effects. A majoritarian system, it is feared, is prey to manipulation by unscrupulous leaders and envious masses bent on the redistribution of wealth.<sup>14</sup> A second strand, associated with Paine, Rousseau, and others of a Radical (or in present parlance, Left-wing) persuasion, perceive the decentralization of power as a mechanism bringing government closer to the people. Their assumption is that centralized power is always controlled by elites, whose interests run contrary to the masses. The only hope for popular control of government is therefore to decentralize the locus of decisionmaking.

Radicals share with their Establishment confreres a belief that government is mostly to be feared, rather than trusted. Both Madison and Paine see good government as equivalent to limited government. In the much-quoted words of Adam Smith:

Every system which endeavors, either, by extraordinary encouragements, to draw towards a particular species of industry a greater share of the capital of the society than what would naturally go to it; or, by extraordinary restraints, to force from a particular species of industry some share of the capital which would otherwise be employed in it; is in reality subversive of the great purpose which it means to promote. It retards, instead of accelerating, the progress of the society towards real wealth and greatness; and diminishes, instead of increasing, the real value of the annual produce of its land and labour.

All systems either of preference or of restraint, therefore, being thus completely taken away, the obvious and simple system of natural liberty establishes itself of its own accord. Every man, as long as he does not violate the laws of justice, is left perfectly free to pursue his own interest his own way, and to bring both his industry and capital into competition with those of any other man, or order to men. The sovereign is completely discharged from a duty, in the attempting to perform which he must always be exposed to innumerable delusions, and for the proper performance of which no human wisdom or knowledge could ever be sufficient; the duty of superintending the industry of private people, and of directing it towards the employments most suitable to the interest of the society. According to the system of natural liberty, the sovereign has only three duties to attend to; three duties of great importance, indeed, but plain and intelligible to common understandings: first, the duty of protecting the society from the violence and invasion of other independent societies; secondly, the duty of protecting, as far as possible, every member of the society from the injustice or oppression of every other member of it, or the duty of establishing an exact administration of justice; and, thirdly, the duty of erecting and maintaining certain public works and certain public institutions, which it can never be for the interest of any individual, or small number of individuals, to erect and maintain; because the profit could never repay the expence to any individual or small number of individuals, though it may frequently do much more than repay it to a great society.<sup>15</sup>

In pithier, though perhaps over-stated, terms, Thomas Paine writes,

Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness. The former

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Filipov et al. (2004), Mogi (1931).

<sup>14</sup> Riker (1982a).

<sup>15</sup> Smith (1776/1939: 650-1). Several centuries later the idea is reiterated in public choice work. "Rent-seeking activity," writes James Buchanan, "is directly related to the scope and range of government activity in the economy, to the relative size of the public sector" (Buchanan 1980: 9; see also Colander 1984: 5).

promotes our happiness *positively* by uniting our affections, the latter *negatively* by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other creates distinctions. The first is a patron, the last a punisher. Society in every state is a blessing, but government even in its best state is but a necessary evil, in its worst state an intolerable one... Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence; the palaces of kings are built on the ruins of the bowers of paradise.<sup>16</sup>

Among twentieth-century writers decentralism takes a number of different forms, each with its own terminology, theoretical framework, and policy concerns. This far-ranging camp includes early group theorists;<sup>17</sup> British pluralists;<sup>18</sup> American pluralists;<sup>19</sup> writers in the public choice tradition, especially those oriented around the intertwined ideas of separate powers, fiscal federalism, veto points, and insulation;<sup>20</sup> Guillermo O'Donnell's conception of horizontal accountability;<sup>21</sup> Arend Lijphart's consensus model;<sup>22</sup> and certain renditions of principal-agency theory.<sup>23</sup> It is for the most part consonant with modern conservatism (i.e., nineteenth-century liberalism), as articulated by A.V. Dicey, Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, Robert Nozick, Herbert Spencer, Wilhelm von Humboldt, and Ludwig von Mises.

Despite their evident differences, all twentieth century decentralists agree with several core precepts — diffusion of power, broad political participation, and limits on governmental action. Fragmentation sets barriers against the abuse of power by minorities, against the overweening ambitions of individual leaders, against democratic tyrannies instituted by the majority, and against hasty and ill-considered public policies. Decentralist government is *limited* government. Each independent institution acts as a check against the others, establishing a high level of inter-branch accountability. Bad laws have little chance of enactment in a system biased heavily against change, where multiple groups possess an effective veto power over public policy. The existence of multiple veto points forces a consensual style of decisionmaking, in which all organized groups are compelled to reach agreement on matters affecting the polity.<sup>24</sup> Limitations on central state authority preserve the strength and autonomy of the market and of civil society, which are viewed as separate and independent spheres. Decentralized

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<sup>16</sup> Paine (1776/1953: 4). James Madison (1773: 525) concurred, though in more moderate tones: “It has been said that all Government is an evil. It would be more proper to say that the necessity of any Government is a misfortune.”

<sup>17</sup> Bentley (1908/1967).

<sup>18</sup> Laski (1917, 1919, 1921). For writings by G.D.H. Cole and J.N. Figgis see Hirst (1989).

<sup>19</sup> Dahl (1956, 1961, 1967), Herring (1940), Truman (1951).

<sup>20</sup> Aghion et al. (2002), Brennan and Hamlin (1994), Buchanan and Tullock (1962), Hammond and Miller (1987), Henisz (2000a, 2000b), Keefer and Stasavage (2002), Lake and Baum (2001), Mueller (1996), Niskanen (1971), North and Weingast (1989), Oates (1972, 1999), Ostrom (1973), Persson et al. (1997a), Rasmusen and Ramseyer (1992), Tiebout (1956), Weingast (1995). For skeptical discussion of these assumptions, on purely formal grounds, see Treisman (2003).

<sup>21</sup> O'Donnell (1999).

<sup>22</sup> Crepaz et al. (2000), Lijphart (1977, 1984b, 1999), Powell (2000).

<sup>23</sup> Crisp, Moreno, and Shugart (2003).

<sup>24</sup> Buchanan and Tullock (1962). Although this vision of politics is associated with the work of George Tsebelis (1995a, 2000, 2002b), Tsebelis himself does not present a normative argument for multiple veto-points.



authority structures may also lead to greater popular control of, and direct participation in, political decisionmaking. Efficiency is enhanced by political bodies that lie close to the constituents they serve, by a flexible apparatus that adjusts to local and regional differences, and through competition that is set into motion among semi-autonomous governmental units.

So much for the theory. What are the specific institutional embodiments of decentralism? Separate powers implies two elective lawmaking authorities as well as a strong and independent judiciary. Federalism presumes the shared sovereignty of territorial units within the nation-state. Both also suggest a bicameral legislature to further divide power at the apex and to insure regional representation. In addition, the decentralist model seems to imply a written constitution, perhaps with enumerated individual rights and explicit restrictions on the authority of the central state, and strong local government. Most decentralists embrace the single-member district as a principle of electoral law, maximizing local-level accountability. There is disagreement over whether this should be supplemented by mechanisms to enhance intra-party democracy, e.g., open primaries or preferential-vote options. If we take the principle of decentralism literally we are led toward several additional institutional features: multiple elective offices, frequent elections (short terms), staggered terms of office, nonconcurrent elections, fixed-term elections (no possibility of premature dissolution), term limits, popular referenda, recall elections, decentralized party structures, independent agencies, and small political units.<sup>25</sup>

Although one might quibble over details, there is clear consensus on the basic institutional embodiments of a decentralist political order, where power is diffused among multiple independent actors. This is the reigning paradigm of good governance.

## **CENTRALISM**

The centralist paradigm may also be traced back to English antecedents in the seventeenth century — in this case to Thomas Hobbes, Jean Bodin, and the nascent concept of sovereignty. Arguably, the primordial theory of democratic governance is Hobbesian. The most important task of government is to prevent humans from killing each other. Keeping the peace is necessary if civil society is to persist, and is achievable only in a political system that monopolizes power in the hands of a single individual. Challenges to unitary sovereignty lead to discord and, at the limit, to civil war, as Hobbes himself witnessed. The sovereign's will is thus a secret ally of good government, for a successful assertion of sovereignty produces a reign of tranquility. The stronger the sovereign, the stronger and more durable the peace.

This is, to be sure, a rather limited vision of good governance. Hobbes did not expect the sovereign to perform good works — beyond suppressing rebellion, that is. In later centuries, the

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<sup>25</sup> Many of these institutional implications have been explored by Arend Lijphart (1984b, 1999).

centralist ideal became more expansive. By the end of the nineteenth century it was possible to envision a sovereign who was at once supreme (for a limited time) *and* accountable. Walter Bagehot, who perhaps more than any other writer deserves to be credited as the theorist of democratic centralism, identified this new model of government in his classic work, *The English Constitution*, where he contrasted the developing English polity with the established (non-developing) American polity:

Hobbes told us long ago, and everybody now understands, that there must be a supreme authority, a conclusive power, in every State on every point somewhere . . .<sup>26</sup> The splitting of sovereignty into many parts amounts to there being no sovereign . . . The Americans of 1787 thought they were copying the English Constitution, but they were contriving a contrast to it. Just as the American is the type of *composite* Governments, in which the supreme power is divided between many bodies and functionaries, so the English is the type of *simple* Constitutions, in which the ultimate power upon all questions is in the hands of the same persons . . . The English Constitution, in a word, is framed on the principle of choosing a single sovereign, and making it good; the American, upon the principle of having many sovereign authorities, and hoping that their multitude may atone for their inferiority . . . Parliamentary government is, in its essence, sectarian government, and is possible only when sects are cohesive.<sup>27</sup>

For reform Whigs, Tories, and nineteenth-century Liberals including Burke, Peel, Disraeli, Gladstone, and Bagehot, strong government — personified in the bureaucracy and the cabinet — was a mechanism to resist popular pressures, restrain corruption, and limit the extravagances of monarchy.

A quite different motivation could be found among social liberals such as T.H. Green, L.T. Hobhouse, Graham Wallas, and the Webbs.<sup>28</sup> For the Fabians (aka New Liberals), strong government was a vehicle for social progress — strong enough to deal with the complexities of a turbulent, industrializing society and to overcome the resistance of privileged classes. Thus, like decentralism, the centralist vision draws on two, radically different, perspectives. An aristocratic, conservative (‘Whig’) version of centralism sits beside an egalitarian, social-democratic (‘Fabian’) version. Both survive today.<sup>29</sup>

These are centralism’s intellectual roots. What about its political-institutional forms? As a specific set of institutions, centralism is usually identified with the British ‘Westminster’ system of government as it developed in the nineteenth century. During this busy century the ancient English constitution underwent a slow but dramatic transformation. The unelective branches of the state — the monarchy and the House of Lords — became increasingly vestigial while the effective electorate grew to include a majority of adult males. Constituencies became exclusively single-member. These factors were sufficient to cause a dramatic centralization of power in the hands of Liberal and Conservative party leaders. British politics was thus transformed in the course of a century from one of Europe’s

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<sup>26</sup> Bagehot (1867/1963: 214-5).

<sup>27</sup> Bagehot (1867/1963: 219-22).

<sup>28</sup> Freedman (1978).

<sup>29</sup> Samuel Huntington is an articulate exemplar of centralist conservatism (e.g., Huntington 1968, 1981; see also Crozier et al. 1975). Most contemporary social democrats are centralists in the Fabian tradition.

most decentralized polities to its most centralized.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile the American polity, while undergoing some degree of centralization, did not evolve nearly so fast nor so far as the British polity. American commentators, like Bagehot, noticed a divergence taking place on the two shores of the Atlantic, and were often critical of the American trajectory.<sup>31</sup> In later years, the Westminster model became the touchstone for a school of thought known as responsible party government, whose adherents deplored the lack of party strength and consequent lack of electoral accountability that seemed to characterize the American polity.<sup>32</sup> Today the centralist model, although rarely articulated in a self-conscious fashion, is attractive to scholars in a wide range of research traditions including economics and rational choice,<sup>33</sup> new institutionalism,<sup>34</sup> the welfare state and the developmental state,<sup>35</sup> and various critiques of interest group liberalism, porkbarrelling, side-payments, and political rents, evils commonly attributed to a fragmented ('hyper-pluralist') political structure.<sup>36</sup>

For these writers, the secret of good government is to be found in the centralization of political power (within a framework of democratic elections). This is usually understood in terms of unitary government (rather than federalism), parliamentarism (rather than presidentialism), a first-past-the-post electoral system, strong parties, two-party dominance, a hierarchical bureaucracy, an unwritten constitution, and a restrained judiciary. These, of course, are the hallmarks of the Westminster model.<sup>37</sup>

## CENTRIPETALISM

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<sup>30</sup> Cox (1987), Harrison (1996).

<sup>31</sup> Ford (1898/1967), Goodnow (1900), Lowell (1889), Wilson (1879/1965, 1885/1956).

<sup>32</sup> American Political Science Association (1950), Burns (1963), Fiorina (1980), Ranney (1962), Schattschneider (1942).

<sup>33</sup> Downs (1957), Schumpeter (1942/1950).

<sup>34</sup> Moe and Caldwell (1994), Olson (1982; 1986).

<sup>35</sup> Evans et al. (1985), Immergut (1992), Katzenstein (1978), Krasner (1978).

<sup>36</sup> Fiorina (1977), Lowi (1969), McConnell (1966). We do not include Lijphart's 'majoritarian' ideal-type since he does not look favorably on this form of government (Lijphart 1984b, 1999).

<sup>37</sup> For the most part, we use the terms centralist and Westminster interchangeably. However, one other model of democratic centralism has attracted the attention of scholars in recent years. Fifth Republic France, in a marked departure from previous French republics, has managed to centralize political authority in the hands of a directly elected president, whose powers include the selection of the prime minister and the dissolution of parliament. The French president thus has considerably greater powers than the American president, under normal circumstances. The caveat is that in order to achieve this centralization it is necessary that parties have a strong electoral presence, a strong presence in the legislature, and party competition must also be reduced to two major parties or coalitions. Otherwise, the president and his appointed prime minister will be unable to muster consistent majorities in the legislature and thus will be forced into a situation not unlike that of presidents in other polities (e.g., in the US). 'Cohabitation' appears to be on the rise in recent decades; indeed, it may be a semi-permanent feature of the Fifth Republic. If so, the latter no longer serves as a paradigm of centralism. And even if not, we may doubt whether other polities, in societies less advanced and with shorter lineages of party competition, could achieve the requisite levels of party organization to assure that majorities in parliament regularly complement presidential victories. In short, as a general system of constitutional design (leaving aside the French experience) it seems that the French model of semi-presidentialism combined with single-member districts is unlikely to be as centralist as the Westminster model.

As British politics evolved in the course of nineteenth century, a small group of high-minded (and high-born) reformers began to wrestle with the implications of a political system that centralized power in the hands of two political parties and, more alarmingly, in the hands of the person who happened to lead the majority party. Dissent gradually crystallized around a set of reforms centered on the electoral system. Proportional representation ('PR') was the general remedy sought by a group of vociferous reformers across Europe including Leonard Courtney, Thomas Hare, Sir John Lubbock, and John Stuart Mill in England, Victor d'Hondt in Belgium, Eduard Hagenbach-Bischoff in Switzerland, and A. Sainte-Lague in France.<sup>38</sup> Their criticisms were varied, and not all would stand the scrutiny of later generations. But three points deserve mention here. First, PR reformers objected to the localist tendencies of the British electoral system, centered as it was on small (1-2 member) constituencies. A proper political system, they thought, should act in the general interest, not in the interests of particular constituencies. PR reformers were also bothered by the vulnerability of such a political system to the vagaries of popular opinion. Since elections in a Westminster system rested on the votes of a few electors in swing districts party leaders had to test the current of public opinion carefully before taking the initiative. This led, it was charged, to a populist style of leadership, one oriented more toward pleasing the electorate in the short-run than advancing its long-run interests.<sup>39</sup>

Third, and most important, PR reformers objected to a system of election that effectively represented only two groups in parliament, and only one group in government. "In a really equal democracy," wrote Mill, "every . . . section would be represented, not disproportionately, but proportionately. . . Man for man [the minority] would be as fully represented as the majority. Unless they are, there is not equal government, but a government of inequality and privilege: one part of the people rule over the rest." Indeed, Mill continued, "[d]emocracy, thus constituted, does not even attain its ostensible object, that of giving the powers of government in all cases to the numerical majority. It does something very different: it gives them to a majority of the majority, who may be, and often are, but a minority of the whole."<sup>40</sup>

In the wake of initiatives launched by Mill and other early protagonists, PR became a reform cause with global dimensions. Many arguments were added to the arsenal, and a few subtracted. Perhaps the most important change in perspective concerned the reformers' views of the role of political parties. While early PR enthusiasts were leery of the "machine" elements associated with organized parties and the consequent loss of member independence, later PR boosters turned the argument on its head. PR would *magnify* the strength of political parties, and this would be a good thing

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<sup>38</sup> This section draws on Carstairs (1980), Commons (1907), Droop (1869), Farrell (2001), Hart (1992), Mill (1865/1958), Noiret (1990). Of the outpouring of literature in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century on the subject of electoral reform, Droop (1869) is perhaps the most impressive example of early thinking about the role of electoral systems in politics and policymaking.

<sup>39</sup> Hart (1992), Mill (1865/1958).

<sup>40</sup> Mill (1865/1958: 103-4).

for democratic governance, for it would achieve the insulation from popular pressures that Mill and his cohort desired. Indeed, the operation of political parties under a PR system is quite different from its operation in a first-past-the-post electoral system. In the latter, party leaders cater to the median voter, small shifts of public opinion typically lead to great shifts in party control, and party leaders are therefore vulnerable. Not only do they risk losing office, and with it virtually all policymaking influence, but they also risk losing their place at the head of the party, for party losses are quite naturally blamed on the leadership. In PR systems, by contrast, party leaders can more easily ride out bad electoral weather. Secure in their leadership posts (since intra-party selection is generally controlled from above), secure from rapid alterations in the public mood (since they need only please a small contingent of hard-core supporters whose electoral support tends to be constant from election to election), and secure from the necessity of implementing an electoral mandate (since governments are formed after extensive periods of negotiation, and subsequent policymaking obscures party responsibility), party leaders approximate Mill's ideal of an 'instructed minority' with long time-horizons.<sup>41</sup>

The electoral-system debate, first broached by J.S. Mill and his contemporaries in the mid-nineteenth century, has drawn a great deal of academic attention in recent years. Yet, the debate is narrowly cast in terms of electoral systems (not broader features of constitutional design), and tends to focus on the rather simple question of how electoral systems structure party competition.<sup>42</sup>

We argue that there is a coherent theory of politics lurking behind the façade of Continental European governments, and others like them around the world. We use the term 'centripetalism' to capture the intellectual lineage of centralism, which directly contributed to the model, as well as criticisms leveled by advocates of PR, as adumbrated above. Centripetalism is rightly regarded as a modification of the British Westminster model along Continental lines.

The theory builds on the fundamental premise that good government results when political energies are focused towards the center. Two elements must be reconciled in order for this process of gathering-together to occur. Institutions must be *inclusive* — they must reach out to all interests, ideas, and identities (at least insofar as they are relevant to the issue at hand). And they must be *authoritative* — they must provide an effective mechanism for reaching agreement and implementing that agreement.<sup>43</sup> Centripetalism thus implies both a) broad-based inclusion and b) centralized authority.

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<sup>41</sup> Mill (1865/1958: ch 7). John Commons was one of the first advocates of PR to recognize the positive role of political parties in the governance process. Proportional representation, he writes, "is based upon a frank recognition of parties as indispensable in free government. This very recognition, instead of making partisan government all-powerful, is the necessary condition for subordinating parties to the public good. To control social forces, as well as physical forces, we must acknowledge their existence and strength, must understand them, and then must shape our machinery in accordance with their laws. We conquer nature by obeying her" (Commons 1907: 134).

<sup>42</sup> Baron and Diermeier (2001), Cox and Shugart (1996), Finer (1975a), Hart (1992).

<sup>43</sup> We should note that the principle of authority does not in any way preclude the *delegation* of power so long as such powers remain accountable to the center and can be withdrawn or rearranged at any time.

This is a problematic claim on the face of it. These two principles seem so radically opposed to one another that it is difficult to envision how a single institution, or set of institutions, could satisfy one criterion without sacrificing the other. They evoke dichotomies — masses versus elites, the people versus the state, small government versus big government, democracy versus autocracy, Rousseau versus Hobbes. Granted, if governance is conceptualized in the usual way, as an arena in which interests are fixed and politics a zero-sum competition, then the notion of reconciling inclusion and authority is polyannish. It seems fanciful to suggest that an institution could empower leaders without disempowering citizens.

Our theory, however, supposes that interests are not primordial. Rather, we suppose that they are to a significant degree endogenous when observed over time and in the context of basic-level political institutions. In other words, the causal relationship between interests and institutions runs in both directions. Similarly, centripetalism supposes a positive-sum view of political power. Given the right mix of institutions, governance can be a win-win game. The movement ‘towards the center’ that we have described is plausible if we assume the plasticity of interests and the positive-sum nature of politics. Centripetal institutions foster consensus primarily by shaping the construction of interests. They are strong by virtue of the power they create, not by virtue of the power that they possess.<sup>44</sup> In its assumptions about interests and power, therefore, the centripetal model is quite different from both the centralist and decentralist models that have dominated work on this question since Hobbes and Rousseau. The authority of the centripetal state derives from its ability to bring together diverse groups and diverse perspectives under conditions of voluntary choice to a common meeting-ground, thus institutionalizing political conflict. The ‘strength’ of the centripetal state is gained through the strength of its popular appeal, its persuasive powers. Rather than a compromise position between inclusion and authority, we suggest that centripetal institutions actually *reconcile* these two principles, drawing the diverse strands of society together towards a single locus of sovereignty. The people rule but they do so indirectly, through chosen representatives, and in a fashion that enhances rather than detracts from the authority of the state.

Let us explore this notion further.

Centripetal institutions gather broadly; their roots are deep, i.e., *embedded*.<sup>45</sup> Through these institutions diverse interests, ideas, and identities (“interests” for short) are aggregated. Particularistic interests are converted into ideologies; ideologies are converted into general-interest appeals; parochial perspectives are nationalized. Centripetal institutions thus encourage a search for common ground.

Centripetal institutions culminate in an authoritative decisionmaking process, one not easily

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<sup>44</sup> This creative, positive-sum view of power takes inspiration from the work of Hannah Arendt (1958). Our concern, in contrast to Arendt’s, is with politics as it occurs in the nation-state, rather than the polis, and in representative institutions, rather than face-to-face communities. For further discussion of the concept of power see Bell et al. (1969), Wrong (1979).

waylaid by minority objections.<sup>46</sup> Institutions pull towards the center, offering incentives to participate and disincentives to defect. *Voice, not vetoes* is the motto of centripetalism.

Visually, we may imagine the centripetal polity in a pyramidal shape — broad at the bottom and narrow at the top, with myriad connecting routes leading up, down, and across. Communication occurs at multiple levels; lines are open. But free-flowing access to decisionmaking centers does not impede the deliberative process, which remains focused on the public interest rather than narrow, sectoral interests.

How is this centripetal energy generated? We argue that under conditions of democratic rule three primary institutions are fundamental to the reconciliation of inclusion and authority: unitarism (no federalism), parliamentarism (no presidentialism), and list-PR (electoral systems that minimize intra-party choice while maximizing inter-party choice). Other, secondary institutions, follow more or less automatically from these factors and from the logic of the theory: weak constitutions (either un-written or ambiguously written so as to impose few limits on sovereignty), strong cabinets (though slightly less durable than in centralist polities), medium-strength committees within the legislature, strong party cohesion, the right of governments to dissolve the assembly, no term limits, few elective offices, congruent electoral cycles, closed processes of intra-party candidate selection, party-dominated elections, multi-party systems (more than two parties gaining significant representation in parliament), strong party organization (centralized, bounded), relatively centralized interest groups that are aligned (implicitly or explicitly) with the major political parties, no referenda (except at the instigation of the government), a restrained judiciary (nonetheless largely independent of partisan influence), and a strong, neutral, and relatively centralized bureaucracy.

## **COMPARISONS**

By way of summary it may be helpful to offer a brief recapitulation and comparison of the three contending normative models of good government that we have considered. All agree on the value of democracy. Differences between these models concern the ways in which democracy is to be organized in order to maximize governmental performance. Decentralists envision political institutions that are separate and independent of one another, resulting in a decisionmaking process that is highly localized and requires universal consent. Centralists envision political institutions that are highly focused and coordinated from the top. Centripetalism sees the source of good government in institutions that reconcile inclusion and authority, bringing interests, ideas, and identities toward the center into an authoritative decisionmaking process.

Moving from the abstract to the concrete, we may now review the specific political institutions associated with these models, as alluded to above. There are at least twenty-one dimensions that one

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<sup>45</sup> Evans (1995).

might consider: territorial sovereignty, the construction of the legislative branch, the executive, the electoral system, the constitution, the cabinet, committees, party cohesion, dissolution, term limits, elective offices, election cycles, procedures for candidate selection, voting cues, campaigns, party organizations, interest groups, referenda, judiciary, and the bureaucracy. These stylized contrasts are presented in Table 1.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> ‘Minority’ is understood here in a numerical sense: something less than a majority.

<sup>47</sup> In perusing this table it is important to keep in mind a distinction between those definitional elements which are fundamental and those which are peripheral. Fundamental attributes are those generally agreed upon, central to the core principle of the theory, and causally prior (exogenous). Peripheral attributes are those about which partisans of each model might disagree, which are not theoretically central to the theory, or which are less exogenous. We regard the first four elements of the table as fundamental: territorial sovereignty (federal or unitary), the legislature (bicameral or unicameral), the executive (presidential or parliamentary), and the electoral system (single-member district or PR-list). The horizontal dotted line on the table demarcates these attributes. Other features are regarded as peripheral, though nonetheless worthy of notice. For other attempts to schematize centralist/decentralist models of governance see Lijphart (1999), MacIntyre (2003), Przeworski (2003).



Table 1:  
Paradigms of Governance, Elaborated and Contrasted

	<u>DECENTRALISM</u>	<u>CENTRALISM</u>	<u>CENTRIPETALISM</u>
<i>Territorial sovereignty:</i>	Federal	Unitary	Unitary
<i>Legislative branch:</i>	Bicameral, symmetrical, and incongruent	Unicameral, asymmetrical, or congruent	Unicameral, asymmetrical, or congruent
<i>Executive:</i>	Presidential	Parliamentary	Parliamentary
<i>Electoral system:</i>	Single-member district or preferential vote	Winner-take-all	Party-list PR
<i>Constitution:</i>	Written, with explicit limits on sovereignty	Unwritten or ambiguous; no explicit limits on sov.	Unwritten or ambiguous; no explicit limits on sov.
<i>Cabinet:</i>	Weak, durable	Strong, durable	Strong, slightly less durable
<i>Committees:</i>	Strong	Weak	Medium-strength
<i>Party cohesion:</i>	Weak	Strong	Strong
<i>Dissolution:</i>	No (fixed terms)	Yes	Yes
<i>Term limits:</i>	Perhaps	No	No
<i>Elective offices:</i>	Many	Few	Few
<i>Election cycles:</i>	Incongruent	Congruent	Congruent
<i>Candidate selection:</i>	Open, diffuse	Closed	Closed
<i>Voting cues:</i>	Personal vote	Party vote	Party vote
<i>Campaigns:</i>	Media, interest groups, candidate organiz's	Parties and party leaders	Parties and party leaders
<i>Party system:</i>	Two-party dominant	Two-party dominant	Multi-party
<i>Party organization:</i>	Weak, decentralized, porous	Strong, centralized, bounded	Strong, centralized, bounded
<i>Interest groups:</i>	Fragmented, nonpartisan	Centralized, party-aligned	Centralized, party-aligned
<i>Referenda:</i>	Possibly	No (or only at instigation of leg.)	No (or only at instigation of leg.)
<i>Judiciary:</i>	Activist, independent	Restrained, independent	Restrained, independent
<i>Bureaucracy:</i>	Multiple independent agencies	Strong, neutral, relatively centralized	Strong, neutral, relatively centralized

## CENTRIPETALISM AS AN EMPIRICAL CONCEPT

The centripetal model is evidently closer to the centralist model than to the decentralist model, as the term itself suggests. Even so, it is distinctive. In this section we explore centripetalism as an empirical concept. Which polities are centripetal? How centripetal are they?

The centripetal framework replicates certain features that are considered typical of the political landscape in Continental Europe. Thus, while contemporary United States serves as the paradigm-case for decentralism, and contemporary United Kingdom the paradigm-case for centralism, contemporary Sweden may offer the best exemplar of centripetalism. Are there also countries in the developing world that exhibit centripetal tendencies?

It is not possible to explore all twenty-one dimensions listed in Table 1 on a global scale. Indeed, some of these dimensions are almost impossible to measure, even within the restrictive confines of the OECD. Even so, it may be possible to take account of those elements that are most important in establishing the governance styles and governance effectiveness of polities across the democratic world. In this section we focus on those elements of a country's institutional profile that are measurable, exogenous (relative to other political institutions), and of greatest presumed importance to politics and policymaking. We shall refer to these factors as *constitutional*. They include the first four dimensions listed in Table 1: a) territorial sovereignty, b) the legislative branch, c) the executive, and d) the electoral system. Because the first two factors are closely related, both theoretically and empirically, we reduce this set to three constitutional factors.

The theory of centripetalism stipulates that constitutional institutions should be *unitary*, *parliamentary*, and *PR*. Unitarism refers to a polity that has a central locus of sovereignty; it is both non-federal and non-bicameral — or, if there are two elective chambers, these houses are either asymmetrical or congruent (thus diluting the importance of a second chamber). Parliamentarism refers to a polity where the government is chosen by, and responsible to, the legislature; it is non-presidential. PR refers here to an electoral system where districts are multimember and voters choose among closed party lists.

In this section we show why these institutions exemplify the centripetal ideal and how they should be operationalized (according to the centripetal ideal). Thus, we address both the theoretical justification of these hypotheses as well as their empirical elaboration. Recall that the key to good government, according to the centripetal model, is to be found in institutions that successfully combine *authority* and *inclusion* within a democratic setting. Institutions must reach out to all interests, ideas, and identities (at least insofar as they are relevant to the issue at hand). And they must provide an effective mechanism for reaching agreement and implementing that agreement. This is the process of gathering-together that, we hypothesize, culminates in good

government.

### UNITARISM

Centripetalism suggests a unitary, rather than federal, form of government. Unitary rule preserves the constitutional authority of central government, while leaving open the possibility of considerable decentralization of power. Thus, when we refer to a polity as unitary we are saying that constitutional authority — sovereignty — is vested in the central (national) government, not that all decision-making occurs at the center. The crucial distinction is that power delegated from national to subnational bodies may be retrieved. In a federal system, by contrast, subnational authorities enjoy constitutional status; their power is inherent rather than delegated. (In referring to subnational authorities in this context we are referring to *regional* governmental bodies — states, territories, provinces, *Laender* — not local bodies.)

The question of inclusion, the second dimension of the centripetal theory, is more complicated. Some writers argue that federal regimes are more inclusionary. However, it has also been suggested that unitary constitutions are no less inclusive than federal constitutions, and perhaps more so. Since this is a long argument, we do not dilate on the matter here. Suffice it to say that the centripetal pull toward the center of a political system is more likely to be felt in a unitary than in a federal polity. Centripetalism presupposes unitarism.

We conceptualize unitarism along two dimensions: a) the *degree of separation* (independence) between national and territorial units, and — if any separation at all — b) the *relative power* of the two players (the more power the center possesses the more unitary the system). Of the many institutional factors that determine variation along these dimensions, two predominate: *federalism* and *bicameralism*. We therefore operationalize unitarism as an additive variable with two components: non-federalism and non-bicameralism, as discussed below.

We understand federalism as an institutionalized division or sharing of responsibilities between a national authority and semi-autonomous regional units. Since this sharing of responsibilities takes a variety of forms and is not always formally prescribed (or is ambiguous in formal-constitutional terms), we utilize three coding categories for our *nonfederalism* variable: 0 = federal (elective regional legislatures plus constitutional recognition of subnational authority), 1 = semi-federal (where there are elective legislatures at the regional level but in which constitutional sovereignty is reserved to the national government), and 2 = nonfederal.<sup>48</sup>

In order to gauge the strength of unitarism we must also examine the status of territorial units within the national government. Insofar as territorial units receive special representation in

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<sup>48</sup> Principal sources employed in coding: Alvarez (1999), Derbyshire and Derbyshire (1996), Elazar (1991), Hicken and Kasuya (2001), McHenry (1997), Watts (1997), *The Database of Political Institutions* (Beck et al. 2000), *The Political Reference Almanac* (polisci.com).

the national legislature — different from what would be allocated by every ballot equally — we shall consider this a violation of the principle of unitarism. In practice, wherever this special consideration obtains it is found in second (‘upper’) chambers. Thus, the second feature of unitarism concerns bicameralism, the sharing of policymaking power between two chambers at the national level. Bicameralism, like unitarism itself, must be understood across two dimensions: a) the relative power of the two bodies (symmetrical if they are roughly equal in power, asymmetrical if the lower house dominates) and b) the composition of the two bodies (congruent if the partisan distribution is roughly the same, incongruent if it is different).<sup>49</sup> Since, like federalism, bicameralism is often a matter of degrees, we code *nonbicameralism* according to the predicted degree of asymmetry and incongruence: 0 = strong bicameral (upper house has some effective veto power; the two houses are incongruent), 1 = weak bicameral (upper house has some effective veto power, though not necessarily a formal veto; the two houses are congruent), 2 = unicameral (no upper house or weak upper house).<sup>50</sup>

We construct the variable unitarism by adding the scores of each country together on these two components: nonfederalism and nonbicameralism. The combination of these two dimensions is justified by the fact that they are both empirically linked (constitutional federalism is a necessary condition for strong bicameralism) and conceptually linked (the purpose of a strong second chamber is usually to protect the powers and prerogatives of subnational units).<sup>51</sup> In a fully unitary state, territorial units (if any) have no constitutional standing, no independently elected territorial legislature, no specific policy purviews reserved to them, and minimal revenue-raising authority.

## **PARLIAMENTARISM**

Centripetalism implies a parliamentary, rather than presidential, system of government. Parliamentarism is a more centralized system of rule, since lawmaking power is not divided between two separately elected (and often incongruent) authorities. Parliamentary systems, we argue, are also more inclusive. The most important policymaking bodies are collegial rather than

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<sup>49</sup> Sometimes the degree of congruence is measured directly; more frequently, it is inferred by the electoral systems, electoral districts, electoral timing, and term lengths that apply to the two chambers.

<sup>50</sup> Principal sources employed in coding: Hicken and Kasuya (2001), Patterson and Mughan (1999), Tsebelis and Money (1997), *The Political Reference Almanac* (polisci.com).

<sup>51</sup> It is important to clarify that unitary government, as we use the term here, is quite different from administrative or fiscal centralization. The latter refers to a particular arrangement of powers and responsibilities between national and subnational units, involving issues such as whether revenue generation is decentralized, whether there are hard budgetary constraints on sub-national units, whether there are clear lines of authority separating national and sub-national responsibilities, whether local institutions are democratically run, and whether effective evaluative procedures are available (Bird and Vaillancourt 1998: 12-5; Burki et al. 1999; Fisman and Gatti 2000; Huther and Shah 1998; Oates 1972; Ter-Minassian 1997; Weingast 1995). Unitary governments may (and often do) institute fiscal-federal policies.

individualistic; additionally, the incentive structures instituted by a parliamentary system encourage cooperation rather than defection, voice rather than exit. Thus, centripetal energy is more likely to be generated by a parliamentary constitution than by a presidential ('separate powers') constitution.

We refer to *parliamentarism* as a system of government in which the executive (the prime minister and cabinet: collectively, 'the government') is chosen by, and responsible to, an elective body (the legislature), thus creating a single locus of sovereignty at the national level.<sup>52</sup>

*Presidentialism*, its contrary, is understood as a system where policymaking power is divided between two separately elected bodies, the legislature and the president. The president's selection is usually by direct popular election, though it may be filtered through an electoral college (as in the US), and the rules pertaining to victory (i.e., by relative or absolute majority) vary from country to country. His (or her) tenure cannot be foreshortened by parliament except in cases of gross malfeasance. S/he is actively engaged in the making of public policy, and in this sense plays a political (i.e., partisan) role.

In practice, between these two polar types we find many admixtures, known generically as 'semi-presidential' systems. Thus, we conceptualize the parliamentary/presidential distinction as a continuum with two dimensions: a) the *degree of separation* (independence) between president and parliament (unity = parliamentary, separation = presidential), and, if there is any separation at all, b) the *relative power* of the two players (the more power the president possesses the more presidential is the resulting system). We capture this complex reality with a three-part coding scheme: 0 = presidential, 1 = semi-presidential, 2 = parliamentary.<sup>53</sup>

Some notes on coding are in order. If a directly elected president exists but has no effective policymaking power, as in Iceland and Ireland, we consider the regime to be parliamentary. If a president is chosen by the legislature but enjoys a fixed term of office (cannot be removed by the legislature except in cases of gross malfeasance) and significant policymaking powers, as in Bolivia, we consider the regime to be semi-presidential. If a president is chosen by popular election, enjoys significant policymaking power, but must share power with a prime minister chosen by the legislature then we also code the system as semi-presidential. This is the most common form of semi-presidentialism, and is currently found in France, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and the Ukraine.

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<sup>52</sup> The precise terms used to refer to these institutions vary somewhat from country to country. Sometimes, the prime minister is a 'chancellor' or even a 'president.' The important point is that s/he is chosen by, and responsible to, the legislature.

<sup>53</sup> Principal sources employed in coding: Alvarez (1999), Delury (1999), Derbyshire and Derbyshire (1996), Diamond (1999), Golder (2003b), Hicken and Kasuya (2001), International Year Book and Statesmen's Who's Who (2001), Jones (1995), *The Database of Political Institutions* (Beck et al. 2000), *The Political Reference Almanac* (polisci.com), Nohlen et al. (1999, 2002). For discussion of semi-presidentialism, see Elgie (1997,

## **PR**

The centripetal theory of democratic governance suggests that electoral systems, like other constitutional elements of a polity, should maximize the twin desiderata of authority and inclusion. These twin goals are best achieved when an electoral system encourages strong national parties while also maintaining low barriers to entry for new parties, strong competition among existing parties, and demographically diverse party delegations. This, in turn, mandates an electoral system that privileges inter-party choice and intra-party representation over intra-party electoral choice. Voters vote, and parties nominate. Further, the vote choice itself should be based on national, partisan principles rather than preferences for individual candidates or district-level concerns. (Insofar as ‘personality’ matters it should be the personality of the party leader, not the district-level candidate, that matters.)

Empirically, three features of an electoral system bear critically on these issues: a) district magnitude ( $M$ ), b) seat allocation rules (majoritarian or proportional), and c) candidate selection rules. The centripetal ideal-type is defined by  $M > 1$ , proportional seat allocation rules, and party-controlled candidate selection. This is the familiar *list-PR* electoral system— ‘PR’ for short.

Let us begin with the issue of district magnitude ( $M$ ). Proportional representation refers generically to an electoral system in which there is a proportional relationship between voting preferences and the allocation of seats in a legislature. To be sure, any representational system has some lower limit below which preferences cannot be translated into seats. Even if there are no statutory thresholds a de facto limit is provided by the number of seats in a legislature and by the size of the district. Thus, if a legislature has 200 members and is chosen in a single, nationwide district ( $M=200$ ) then the effective threshold is roughly 1/200th of the effective electorate, even under the most proportional rules of seat allocation.

We do not expect to find a perfectly linear relationship between proportionality and good governance. There is no reason to suppose, for example, that Israel and Denmark (two of the most proportional systems in the world) should experience better governance than Sweden or Spain (countries with moderately proportional electoral systems) by virtue of having more proportional seat/vote ratios. Thus, we approach that the question of proportionality through a simple, three-part coding system that recognizes important categorical differences among majoritarian systems, mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) systems (combining single-member and multi-member districts in parallel [noncompensatory] lists, as in Russia and Mexico), and proportional electoral systems ( $M > 2$  [binomial electoral systems are not considered to be proportional]). Mixed-member proportional (MMP) electoral systems, where extra seats are

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1999), Nousiainen (1988, 2001), Shugart and Carey (1992), Skach (forthcoming).

designed to rectify non-proportional outcomes achieved by single-member district contests (e.g., Bolivia, Germany, New Zealand, Venezuela), are classified as PR since the principle of proportionality is preserved for the system as a whole.<sup>54</sup>

*Majoritarian* refers here to all single-member district electoral systems, whether they employ first past the post (plurality) rules, as in the well-known Westminster system, or majority (double-ballot) rules, as in France and many former French colonies. (Block vote systems are majoritarian at the inter-party level, but not at the intra-party level, as discussed below.)

Usually, a higher district magnitude offers greater choice to the elector among parties (the exception is the block vote system, discussed below). Indeed, district magnitude is the single most important factor in determining how many *effective* inter-party choices — choices that might culminate in electing a representative to parliament — voters will have at their disposal as they enter the ballot booth.

The question of intra-party choice is somewhat more complicated. Usually, where district magnitude is equal to one, constituency members will be able to determine the nomination of candidates (perhaps with some vetting from central party headquarters), and hence exercise a degree of intra-party choice. Of course, voters in the *general* electorate will be prohibited from exercising any choice in this matter, under most circumstances. Where district magnitude is greater than one ( $M > 1$ ) it is common for candidate selection to be decided by party leaders (either at regional or national levels), with less input from the constituency parties. Thus, all things being equal, district magnitude is inversely correlated with intra-party choice.

There are of course other features of an electoral system that may affect the degree to which the general electorate intervenes in intra-party choices (candidate selection). They include a) mandatory write-in ballots (e.g., the Philippines); b) multiple lists emanating from factions of the same party (e.g., Colombia, Uruguay); c) the single-transferable vote (STV); d) the alternate vote (AV); e) the single-non-transferable vote (SNTV), f) ‘open-list’ systems of PR where only preferential votes determine the order of candidates on a party’s list (as in pre-reform Italy) or where preferential voting is mandatory.<sup>55</sup> Wherever electoral systems employ one of these preferential voting options, which we shall refer to as *strong preferential voting* (to distinguish them from the more usual, and less consequential, forms of preferential voting), we code such countries as ‘0’ on our three-part coding scheme. It is important to note that this re-coding affects only a handful of countries at various points in the postwar period: Australia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Luxembourg, Malta, Nauru, Papua

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<sup>54</sup> M refers to the average (mean) district magnitude in a legislature. On MMM and MMP systems, see Shugart and Wattenberg (2001).

<sup>55</sup> In the latter case, we assume that in order for intra-party preference voting to upstage party leaders in the selection of candidates there must be no default candidate ranking on the ballot that voters might fall back

New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Taiwan, Uruguay, and Vanuatu. (It should also be noted that many of the countries listed above are, by virtue of missing data or authoritarian rule, already excluded from our statistical analyses.)<sup>56</sup>

Another important deviation from pure PR or pure majoritarianism consists of a relatively rare electoral system known as the *block vote*, employed in Bermuda, Djibouti, Ecuador, Jordan, Kuwait, Laos, Lebanon, the Maldives, Mali, Mauritius, Mongolia, the Philippines, Senegal, Singapore, Thailand, Tunisia, and the Virgin Islands (US) at various points in time.<sup>57</sup> Here  $M > 1$  but seats are allocated on a winner-take-all basis, so that the party winning a plurality captures all seats in a district. Electors cast either as many votes as there are seats available (and may be allowed to cross lists) or a single vote for a party (in effect, a party-list vote).<sup>58</sup> Note that in order to qualify as a block vote system in our typology the electoral system must be based on party lists (even if voters are allowed to exercise a preferential vote); if ballots list only individual candidates (without party affiliation) then it will be classified as a strong-preferential voting system. The block vote system is even more majoritarian than the single-member district system insofar as it adopts the winner take all electoral principle in multimember districts. However, political parties, rather than individual candidates, compete against each other. This makes it easy for party leaders to include members of key minority groups on their lists. Usually, this system is considerably more inclusive than an electoral system based on single-member districts because parties have incentives to present diverse lists, including all significant minority social groups within a constituency, and because the electoral dynamic itself is apt to be somewhat less confrontational.<sup>59</sup> It also seems to uphold the strength and cohesion of party leadership, since candidate selection is still, for all practical purposes, a party monopoly (even where open-list voting is possible). Thus, we code block vote systems ‘1’ on our three-part scale.

A final deviation from pure PR consists of polities where a majority of seats in the legislature (we refer, as always, to the lower or dominant legislature, if bicameral) are reserved for a particular social or ethnic group *if* such seat reservations (‘communal rolls’) involve a significant departure from the one-person/one-vote principle (i.e., if it entails significant malapportionment between the designated groups). In such cases (e.g., Fiji), PR = 0. We do not introduce other forms of malapportionment into our coding category, since these deviations generally have less severe consequences (though naturally, they do have some consequences).

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on as a voting cue (lists are ‘unranked’).

<sup>56</sup> For work on intra-party preference voting and its variants (e.g., STV, SNTV) see Bowler and Grofman (2000), Grofman et al (1999), Katz (1986a), Shugart et al. (2003).

<sup>57</sup> We exclude Fiji from this list since legislative seats are chosen from separate ethnic lists (Lal and Larmour 1997).

<sup>58</sup> Sometimes, the single-vote system is called a ‘party block vote’ to distinguish it from the more common block vote system in which voters have as many votes as there are seats.



To conclude, although the term proportional representation, strictly interpreted, refers to the proportionality in the relationship between votes cast and seats allocated, we appropriate its abbreviation ('PR') to refer to a distinction among electoral systems around the world that gives pride of place to list-PR, the most common form of proportional representation. Other systems are ranked lower in this coding according to their deviation from the principles articulated at the outset: high district magnitude (M), proportional seat allocation rules, and closed candidate selection rules. Thus, the coding for the PR variable is revised as follows: 0 = majoritarian or preferential-vote, 1 = mixed-member majority (MMM) or block vote, and 2 = list-PR.<sup>60</sup>

## **SUMMARY**

Thus far, we have treated the theory of centripetalism as a descriptive phenomenon. However, our theoretical interest is in the causal role of centripetal institutions on good governance. Do (democratic) countries with centripetal institutions adopt better policies and enjoy better policy outcomes than countries with centralized or decentralized institutions?

In testing the centripetal hypothesis, we suppose that it takes time for institutions to exert an appreciable effect on governance outcomes. A country switching from a presidential to parliamentary system (or establishing a parliamentary system in a newly democratic or independent setting) should not expect to see immediate, dramatic changes in the quality of governance. Instead, these effects are likely to cumulate over time as the new institutional rules begin to affect actions and expectations (Gerring et al, in process). To represent this historical component empirically we create a new variable that draws upon the annual ("raw") scores for Centripetalism described above. We assume that history matters (i.e., a country's long-run experience with constitutional institutions is what helps drive governance outcomes), but that recent history matters more.

To this end, we calculate a moving, weighted sum of the annual scores of each of our underlying explanatory factors, beginning in 1901 and ending in the observation year. We construct the weights to capture long-term historical patterns while giving greater weight to more recent years. A country's score in 1996 would be the weighted sum of its scores from 1901 to

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<sup>59</sup> On the Mauritius experience see Mathur (1997a, 1997b). On Mali see Vengroff (1997).

<sup>60</sup> Countries are excluded from this classification if a majority of seats in the lower, or most powerful, house are appointed or are elected through a system of reserved seats, as in Fiji and Hong Kong. Note that where coding principles conflict, the lower coding prevails. Thus, although the Philippines employs an MMP electoral system, it also employs mandatory write-in ballots, a provision that classifies the electoral system as strong preferential vote. Hence, the Philippines is coded as 0, rather than 1, in the current period. Principal sources employed for coding: Golder (2003b), Hicken and Kasuya (2001), Massicote and Blais (1999), Reynolds and Reilly (1997), Shvetsova (1999), the EPIC Project (<http://www.epicproject.org/>), the Interparliamentary Union web site (<http://www.ipu.org/>), *The Database of Political Institutions* (Beck et al. 2000), *The Political Reference Almanac* (polisci.com), Nohlen et al. (1999, 2002).

1996. Its score in 1998 would be the weighted sum of its scores from 1901 to 1998, and so on.<sup>61</sup>

Country-years are counted in this weighted summation process (and in the empirical analysis to follow) so long as a country surpassed a minimum threshold of democracy during that year. (Centripetalism is a theory of *democratic* governance; it has no application within authoritarian settings.) We employ a relatively low threshold of democracy because we wish to include as many plausible cases as possible in our analysis and because the logic of centripetalism should be operative so long as there is a modicum of multi-party competition. Thus, we include a country-year in our analysis so long as it obtains a score greater than zero — on a scale that ranges from -10 to 10 — on the Polity2 measure of democracy.<sup>62</sup> Our intent here is not to define democracy *per se*, but rather to establish the empirical boundaries of the study. To the extent that our definition is too lenient, we expect that it biases the results against our hypotheses, since we anticipate that centripetal institutions will be less effective in less democratic settings.

To this point, we have described the coding of three constitutional components of the centripetal theory: Unitarism, Parliamentarism, and PR. Of course, our primary theoretical interest is in their combined effect. Thus, we create a final composite score, *Centripetalism*, to capture the universe of democratic polities in a single measure. This is a simple sum of three components — unitarism, parliamentarism and PR — each converted to standardized units with a mean of zero and a standard deviation of one to ensure similar units and thus equal weighting when summed together to create the new measure. We employ the same historical weighting technique described above to construct our explanatory Centripetalism variable.

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics and correlations for our weighted sum variables for the years used in the empirical analysis to follow. Figure 1 shows the distribution of cases for our weighted sum Centripetalism variable in 2000. A complete list of country-cases in 2000 meeting our minimal definition of democracy (N=124) and ranked by their weighted sum Centripetalism scores, along with their annual (raw) scores on all four variables, can be found in Table 3.<sup>63</sup> We hypothesize that countries at the top of this list have better political institutions and should therefore experience better governance outcomes, *ceteris paribus*. The following section tests this argument empirically.

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<sup>61</sup> See Gerring and Thacker (forthcoming) for details on the construction of the weighting scheme.

<sup>62</sup> Marshall and Jaggers (2002). Because the Polity2 democracy score does not contain data for several countries (mostly micro-states), we impute missing values using the following alternative measures of democracy: the Freedom House Political Rights indicator (Gastil, various years), Bollen's (1993) Liberal Democracy variable, Vanhanen's (1990) Competition measure, and Banks's (1994) Legislative Effectiveness I and II and Party Legitimacy variables.

<sup>63</sup> Note that a recently democratized polity, even if fully centripetal in its current institutions, would not be high on this list because of the historically weighted and summed measures used to generate this variable.

Table 2:  
Descriptive Statistics for Cumulative, Weighted Sum Scores

Moments: 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Unitarism (Unit)	373	62.3	53.2	0	200
Parliamentarism (Parl)	373	30.6	32.6	0	100
List-PR (PR)	373	16.0	26.3	0	100
<b>Centripetalism</b>	373	0.01	2.57	-2.88	8.19

Correlations: 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002

	Unit	Parl
Parl	0.69***	
PR	0.44***	0.29***

\*\*\* Sig. at .0001 level (two-tailed test)  
N=373

Figure 1:  
Centripetalism: The Distribution of Cases (2000)

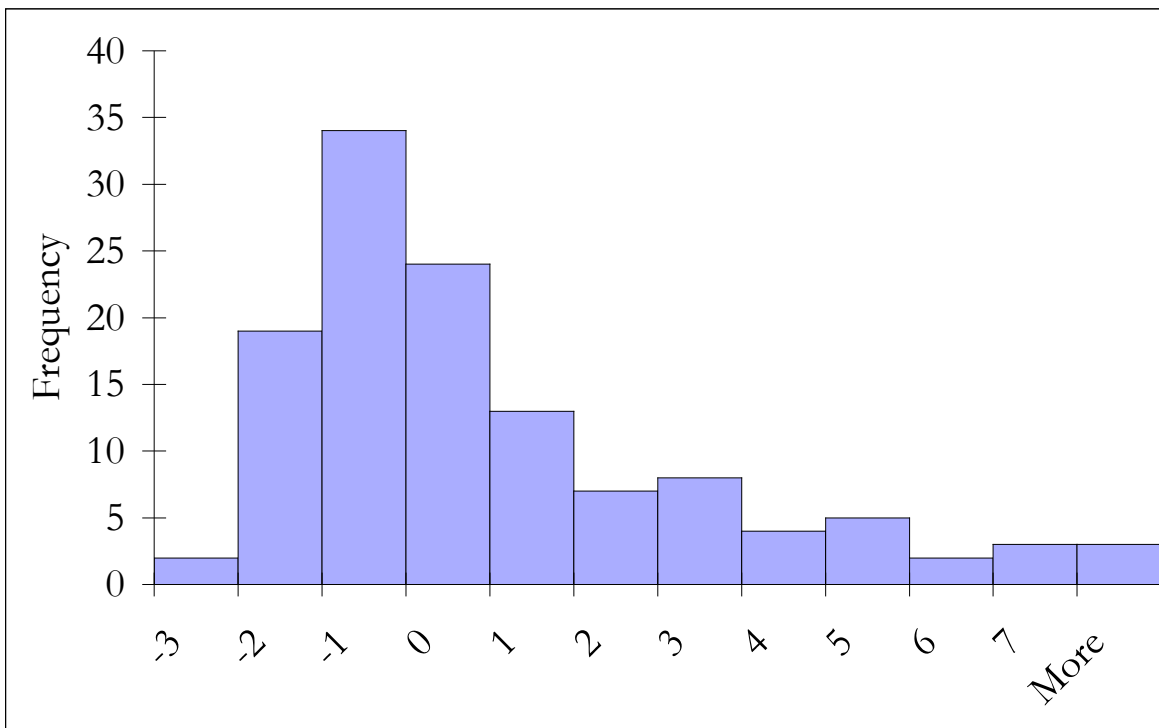


Table 3: Democratic Polities of the World, 2000

Rank	Country	Contemporary				Cum.: Cent	Rank	Country	Contemporary				Cum.: Cent
		Unit	Parl	PR	Cent				Unit	Parl	PR	Cent	
1	Denmark	4	2	2	2.95	8.30	63	Bulgaria	4	2	2	2.95	-0.57
2	Sweden	4	2	2	2.95	8.30	64	Belize	3	2	0	0.06	-0.58
3	Iceland	4	2	2	2.95	8.12	65	Panama	4	0	1	-0.34	-0.60
4	Norway	3	2	2	2.19	7.10	66	Solomon Is.	2	2	0	-0.70	-0.69
5	Netherlands	3	2	2	2.19	6.85	67	Slovenia	4	2	2	2.95	-0.74
6	Belgium	1	2	2	0.66	6.44	68	St. Kitts & N.	2	2	0	-0.70	-0.77
7	Austria	3	2	2	2.19	6.10	69	Latvia	4	2	2	2.95	-0.83
8	Israel	4	2	2	2.95	5.83	70	Namibia	4	1	2	1.84	-0.89
9	Costa Rica	4	0	2	0.73	5.05	71	Hungary	4	2	1	1.89	-0.94
10	New Zealand	4	2	2	2.95	4.92	72	Antigua & Barb.	2	2	0	-0.70	-0.94
11	UK	4	2	0	0.82	4.53	73	Poland	3	1	2	1.08	-0.98
12	Finland	4	2	0	0.82	4.32	74	Moldova	4	1	2	1.84	-1.06
13	Luxembourg	4	2	0	0.82	4.29	74	Sao Tome & P.	4	1	2	1.84	-1.06
14	Ireland	4	2	0	0.82	4.23	76	Albania	4	2	1	1.89	-1.12
15	Turkey	4	2	2	2.95	4.18	77	Kiribati	3	1	0	-1.05	-1.12
16	Germany	0	2	2	-0.10	3.74	78	Argentina	1	0	2	-1.56	-1.14
17	Japan	3	2	1	1.12	3.61	79	Dom. Republic	2	0	1	-1.86	-1.15
18	Greece	4	2	0	0.82	2.93	80	Romania	3	1	2	1.08	-1.16
19	South Africa	1	2	2	0.66	2.88	81	Switzerland	0	1	0	-3.34	-1.18
20	Portugal	4	2	2	2.95	2.61	82	Cape Verde	4	1	2	1.84	-1.23
21	Canada	2	2	0	-0.70	2.53	83	Nicaragua	4	0	2	0.73	-1.24
22	Spain	2	2	2	1.42	2.31	84	Cambodia	2	2	2	1.42	-1.28
23	Mauritius	4	2	1	1.89	2.27	85	Paraguay	3	0	2	-0.04	-1.28
24	Lichtenstein	4	2	2	2.95	2.23	86	Lithuania	4	1	1	0.78	-1.31
24	San Marino	4	2	2	2.95	2.23	87	Macedonia	4	2	1	1.89	-1.36
26	France	3	1	0	-1.05	2.09	88	Benin	4	0	2	0.73	-1.38
27	Sri Lanka	3	1	0	-1.05	1.93	89	Chile	2	0	0	-2.93	-1.42
28	Italy	2	2	1	0.36	1.93	90	Colombia	1	0	0	-3.69	-1.42
29	Cyprus (G)	4	0	2	0.73	1.76	91	Andorra	4	2	1	1.89	-1.45
30	Malta	4	2	0	0.82	1.58	92	Bangladesh	4	2	0	0.82	-1.48
31	Botswana	4	2	0	0.82	1.39	93	Nepal	3	2	0	0.06	-1.55
32	Jamaica	3	2	0	0.06	1.36	94	Mali	4	1	1	0.78	-1.57
33	Guatemala	4	0	2	0.73	1.15	95	Ethiopia	0	2	0	-2.23	-1.57
34	Trin. & Tob.	3	2	0	0.06	1.13	96	Madagascar	4	0	0	-1.40	-1.61
35	W. Samoa	3	2	0	0.06	0.84	97	Marshall Islands	4	2	0	0.82	-1.61
36	Barbados	3	2	0	0.06	0.81	98	Ukraine	4	1	1	0.78	-1.68
37	Ecuador	3	0	0	-2.16	0.74	99	Mongolia	4	1	0	-0.29	-1.69
38	Nauru	4	2	0	0.82	0.68	100	Armenia	4	1	1	0.78	-1.72
39	Thailand	3	2	1	1.12	0.61	101	Georgia	4	0	1	-0.34	-1.75
40	Australia	0	2	0	-2.23	0.53	102	Philippines	1	0	0	-3.69	-1.84
41	Honduras	4	0	2	0.73	0.53	103	Mozambique	4	0	2	0.73	-1.86
42	Guyana	4	0	2	0.73	0.40	104	Monaco	4	2	0	0.82	-1.88
43	Fiji	3	2	0	0.06	0.29	105	Niger	4	0	2	0.73	-1.91
44	Czech Rep.	3	2	2	2.19	0.24	106	Guinea-Bissau	4	0	2	0.73	-1.97
45	Bahamas	3	2	0	0.06	0.20	107	CAR	4	1	0	-0.29	-2.01
46	Bolivia	1	1	2	-0.45	0.17	108	Taiwan	3	1	0	-1.05	-2.07
47	Malaysia	1	2	0	-1.47	0.14	109	Lesotho	4	2	0	0.82	-2.10
48	Dominica	4	2	0	0.82	0.13	110	Zambia	4	0	0	-1.40	-2.12
48	Tuvalu	4	2	0	0.82	0.13	111	Indonesia	4	1	2	1.84	-2.14
50	South Korea	4	1	1	0.78	0.08	112	Russia	0	1	1	-2.28	-2.25
51	St. Lucia	4	2	0	0.82	0.01	113	Seychelles	4	0	0	-1.40	-2.27
51	St. Vin. & G.	4	2	0	0.82	0.01	114	Malawi	4	0	0	-1.40	-2.34
53	PNG	3	2	0	0.06	0.01	115	Palau	4	0	0	-1.40	-2.42
54	Estonia	4	2	2	2.95	-0.12	116	Ghana	4	0	0	-1.40	-2.49
55	Venezuela	2	0	2	-0.80	-0.16	117	Micronesia	2	0	0	-2.93	-2.50
56	El Salvador	4	0	2	0.73	-0.16	118	Iran	4	0	0	-1.40	-2.57
57	India	0	2	0	-2.23	-0.20	119	Mexico	0	0	1	-3.39	-2.62
58	Slovak Rep.	4	2	2	2.95	-0.23	120	Croatia	3	1	1	0.01	-2.62
59	Suriname	4	1	2	1.84	-0.25	121	Nigeria	0	0	0	-4.46	-2.63
60	Uruguay	4	0	0	-1.40	-0.32	122	Senegal	4	0	1	-0.34	-2.76
61	Grenada	3	2	0	0.06	-0.46	123	Brazil	0	0	0	-4.46	-2.88
62	Vanuatu	3	2	0	0.06	-0.48	123	United States	0	0	0	-4.46	-2.88

Demo: democracy score according to the Polity2 index (ranging from -10 to +10). Unit: unitarism. Parl: parliamentarism. PR: list-proportional electoral system. Cent: Centripetalism. Cum. Cent: Weighted, cumulative sum of Centripetalism. N=124.

## A BRIEF EMPIRICAL TEST

In order to test the hypothesis that centripetal institutions improve the quality of governance in democratic polities we must identify outcome indicators that are a) measurable, b) valid crossnationally, c) a direct result of government activity (so that the outcome is interpretable as a product of political institutions), and d) clear in their implications for the quality of governance (good or bad relative to the public interest). Length precludes an extensive analysis of possible indicators (but see Gerring and Thacker forthcoming). Here, we limit ourselves to a single set of good governance indicators that have come to be viewed as relatively authoritative within the new field of governance studies. These composite indices, developed by Daniel Kaufmann and his colleagues at the World Bank, include 1) Corruption control, 2) Government effectiveness, 3) Political stability, 4) Rule of law, 5) Regulatory quality, and 6) Voice and accountability. These six indicators are now a standard component of foreign aid assessments and other policy decisions throughout the world; they also serve as common empirical measures in academic work. There is perhaps no better single source for understanding the quality of governance around the world at the present time.<sup>64</sup>

*Corruption control* is a composite indicator drawn from a set of international surveys that attempt to determine corruption among public officials, the effectiveness of anticorruption initiatives (Standard and Poor's DRI); corruption among public officials (Economist Intelligence Unit); corruption in the political system as a threat to foreign investment (Political Risk Services); frequency of additional payments necessary to 'get things done,' corruption as an obstacle to business (World Development Report).<sup>65</sup> Kaufmann and colleagues name this variable 'corruption control' — transforming a negative into a positive characteristic — so that it can be more easily compared with other measures of good governance.<sup>66</sup>

*Government effectiveness* measures perceptions of the quality of public service provision, including the bureaucracy, the competence of civil servants, the independence of the civil service from political pressures, and the credibility of the government's policy commitments. Surveys attempt to determine the pro-business quality of government policy, the efficacy of government, the degree of red tape and bureaucratic efficiency (Economic Intelligence Unit); institutional rigidities that hinder bureaucratic efficiency, quality of the government's personnel, personnel turnover lowering the quality of the bureaucracy (Standard and Poor's DRI); the government's ability to carry out programs, bureaucratic

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<sup>64</sup> Kaufmann et al. (1999a, 1999b, 2002). For a skeptical discussion of these indicators see Weyland (2003).

<sup>65</sup> Kaufmann et al. (1999b: 560). This list of questions and surveys (like those that follow) represents only the most important sources (designated 'representative sources') among the longer set of survey questions employed in the construction of this index. See also Kaufmann et al. (1999a).

<sup>66</sup> The variable is referred to in Kaufmann et al.'s first work (1999a, 1999b) as 'graft' and subsequently (2002)

quality (Political Risk Services); the likelihood that when government actions violate rules a citizen can find another forum to pursue her claims, management time spent with bureaucrats, customs efficiency, general conditions of roads, efficiency of mail delivery, quality of public health care provision, efficiency in delivering services, predictability of changes in rules and laws, credibility of commitment to policies (World Development Report).<sup>67</sup>

*Political stability* measures perceptions of the likelihood that the government in power will be destabilized or overthrown by unconstitutional or violent means. It includes risks due to major urban riots, major insurgency or rebellion, military coup, unconstitutional government changes, political terrorism, political assassination, civil war, armed conflict, social unrest, other sorts of internal conflicts.

The most important surveys used to compile this aggregate index attempt to determine the following: the risk of urban riots, insurgencies and rebellions, coups, terrorism, assassinations, and civil war (Standard and Poor's DRI); armed conflict or war, social unrest, terrorist threat, political violence (Economist Intelligence Unit); internal conflict, ethnic tensions (Political Risk Services); terrorism, likelihood of unconstitutional government changes (World Development Report).

*Rule of law* measures confidence in the rules of society and law-abidingness, including perceptions of the incidence of crime, effectiveness and predictability of the judiciary, and the enforceability of contracts. Surveys measure losses and costs of crime, kidnapping of foreigners, enforceability of government contracts (Standard and Poor's DRI); corruption in banking, crime (Economist Intelligence Unit); black market, property rights (Heritage Foundation/Wall Street Journal); law and order tradition (Political Risk Services); theft and crime, confidence in authority to secure property, unpredictability of the judiciary, crime and theft as obstacles to business (World Development Report).<sup>68</sup>

*Regulatory quality* measures policies friendly and unfriendly to the market including price controls, government intervention in the economy, wage-price controls, tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade, restrictions on foreign capital, excessive banking regulation, and import/export regulations. Constituent surveys measure regulations that impose a burden on business, government intervention in the economy, wage-price controls, tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade, regulation of foreign capital flows, foreign and domestic banking regulation (Heritage Foundation/Wall Street Journal); import/export regulations, other regulations of business, legal restrictions on ownership of business and equity by non-residents (Standard and Poor's DRI); regulatory obstacles to opening a new business, price controls, regulations on foreign trade, foreign currency regulations, and general uncertainty about the costs of regulations (World Development Report).<sup>69</sup>

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as 'corruption control.'

<sup>67</sup> Kaufmann et al. (1999b: 55).

<sup>68</sup> Kaufmann et al. (1999b: 58).

<sup>69</sup> Kaufmann et al. (1999b: 56). In some versions, Kaufman et al refer to this variable as 'regulatory burden.'

*Voice and accountability* measures the openness of the political process and the quality of civil liberties and political rights — “the extent to which citizens of a country are able to participate in the selection of governments,” as well as the independence of the media (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Zoido-Loboton 1999b: 7). Since the theory of centripetalism is limited, by definition, to democratic frameworks — and so, of course, are our empirical tests — this indicator may be interpreted as measuring the quality of democracy *within* formally democratic countries. (As indicated by Table 1, there is still a significant amount of variance to be explained.)

Table 4 provides descriptive statistics for each of these dependent variables.

*Table 4:*  
**Governance Measures: 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002**

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std Dev</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Corruption Control	327	0.25	1.00	-1.54	2.58
Government Effectiveness	345	0.22	0.92	-1.50	2.52
Political Stability	303	0.26	0.82	-1.86	1.77
Rule of Law	349	0.30	0.74	-1.88	1.87
Regulatory Quality	337	0.27	0.94	-1.50	2.36
Voice & Accountability	372	0.55	0.71	-1.31	1.67

Limited to minimally democratic cases, where Polity2>0

Each of these six indicators draws on polls conducted by consulting groups, NGOs, and intergovernmental organizations. Some, like those conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit, Standard and Poor’s and DRI/McGraw-Hill, Freedom House, Heritage Foundation, Political Risk Services, and the World Bank, are broad in coverage (these are referred to by the authors as ‘representative sources’). Others are limited to particular regions of the world (‘non-representative sources’). Data for each poll is drawn from respondents of two basic types: country experts and firm managers or citizens (each carrying roughly equal weight in the analysis). Expert polls

represent consensus ratings agreed upon by a small number of country, sector, and regional experts convened by the reporting organization. Typically, country analysts produce an initial assessment for each country based on publicly-available information and their direct knowledge of the country. For most of the sources we report, these assessments are guided by a checklist of specific issues which analysts take into consideration when providing their initial ratings. For all sources we report, these assessments are guided by a checklist of specific issues which analysts take into consideration when providing their initial ratings [reported in *Ibid.*]. . . These initial ratings are then reviewed by a panel of regional and sectoral experts, who determine the final rating for each country. In addition to providing quality control on the initial assessments, the purpose of this final stage is to improve the cross-country comparability of the ratings by ensuring that countries are benchmarked appropriately.<sup>70</sup>

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We adopt their recent terminology (‘regulatory quality’ (Kaufmann et al. 2002).

<sup>70</sup> Kaufmann et al. (1999b: 4).

Mass surveys, by contrast,

present averages by country of the responses of a large number of respondents to a variety of questions relating to governance. Typically, survey respondents are asked to rate aspects of governance on a categorical scale. The sampling frame . . . varies. Some sources focus on the opinions of the business community, others focus on the opinions of expatriates, and some are broad-based surveys of citizens.<sup>71</sup>

Poll results (of both types) are aggregated into subject areas, according to the nature of the question. The composite index for each variable is then constructed by the authors from the individual surveys using an unobserved components model.<sup>72</sup> Thus far, the authors have aggregated four rounds of surveys, covering 1996, 1998, 2000 and 2002.

The only seriously problematic feature of the Kaufmann indicators is that they are limited to a narrow slice of time. (The polls upon which the indicators are based are simply not available for a wide enough sample of countries to extend these indicators back prior to the mid-1990s.) Furthermore, because of the standardization technique used by Kaufmann et al. and the entrance of new countries into the dataset over time, scores within countries are not directly comparable over time.<sup>73</sup> Thus, our analysis is essentially cross-sectional rather than time-series. We employ a between-effects estimator, which averages the results from each separate cross-section. This provides the benefits of bringing as much data as possible to bear on the problem at hand without violating the highly questionable (in this instance) temporal assumptions of regression analysis. (Results do not differ appreciably from a simple pooled-OLS format.)

In choosing plausible controls we have tried to be sensitive to the literature on these topics. Existing studies suggest that these governance outcomes are likely to be influenced by multiple economic, geographic, demographic, and cultural factors. While not all of these plausible influences are easily measured in a global setting we try to include all of the standard controls plus several not-so-standard controls that nonetheless may be important.

Economic development is measured by GDP per capita in logarithmic form (World Development Indicators [WDI]). We include a variety of regional controls to measure whatever cultural, demographic, geographic, historical, and socioeconomic factors might be common at a continental level. These include Africa (sub-Saharan), Asia, and Latin America/Caribbean. Socialism, generally understood to have negative repercussions for the quality of governance, is measured by a dummy variable indicating that a country is or was a socialist system at some time in the twentieth century (LaPorta et al. 1999). Colonial background is measured by a dummy variable that is coded 1 if a country inherited an

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid. (4-5).

<sup>72</sup> Regrettably, it is not possible to obtain disaggregated survey results (question by question). Most of the data was obtained by Kaufmann and colleagues from consulting agencies, who had proprietary interests in keeping the results in aggregate form.

<sup>73</sup> Kaufman et al. standardize scores within each observation year to facilitate crossnational comparison and interpretation. This means, however, that the same score may have different meanings in different years.



English legal system, and zero otherwise (LaPorta et al. 1999). Other colonial systems seem to have been uniformly “bad” for governance outcomes in the developing world, and hence are captured in this single dichotomous variable. Latitude (logged) measures the — presumably beneficial — effects stemming from being farther from the equator (Landes 1999; Sachs and Warner 1997b). Ethnic heterogeneity, generally considered to have a deleterious effect on economic and political development, is measured by a fractionalization index developed by Alesina et al. (2002). Population, which is sometimes seen as hindering development, is measured as a logged variable (WDI). Since the core/periphery location of a country may influence its economic development, as well as the diffusion of political institutions, ideas and governability, we also measure a country’s distance (in kilometers) from the nearest financial center (London, New York, or Tokyo). Mineral wealth, particular in the form of easily exploited oil and diamond reserves, is often considered to be a drag on development, perhaps even an invitation to civil war. We measure both oil and diamonds in “raw” form (i.e., as millions of barrels per day and billions of metric carats per year, respectively), as a fraction of total population (Humphreys 2004).<sup>74</sup> Protestantism (percent of population with a Protestant religious background) is sometimes regarded as a source of good governance (Gerring and Thacker 2004).

Finally, we include a control variable that measures the average value of the dependent variable across all countries, weighted by the geographic distance of each country from the country in question. The assumption is that countries lying close to one another will display similar values for extraneous reasons (culture, geography, diffusion, and so forth). By including this variable in all regressions we should be able to minimize possible spatial autocorrelation in the sample.

In order to address potential problems of endogeneity, which can imply a larger causal role than warranted for the affected variables, and which can violate important assumptions of ordinary-least-squares and related regression techniques, we employ a base-year value from 1996 for GDP per capita in all estimations. In other words, we control for the per capita income of a country at the starting point of the sample period, rather than the level of per capita income in each observation year. Arguably, corruption, rule of law, etc. may affect the economic growth and prosperity of a country, just as those factors themselves may influence governance. By using a base year measure as a control, we remove much of this potential distortion.<sup>75</sup>

Because there exists no standard benchmark model for any of these dependent variables we

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<sup>74</sup> Some indicators measure the export value of these goods as a percent of all exports or of GDP. We believe that this confuses two issues — the extent of natural resources in a country and the degree of its economic development or export orientation, which is implicit in the denominator. Since it is the first, not the second, that we wish to measure it seems preferable to employ a “raw” measure of natural resources.

<sup>75</sup> The alternative to the use of a base year is the employment of instrumental variables in place of per capita income, but there are no viable instruments that can feasibly be used in this particular case. We anticipate that any remaining endogeneity — likely quite minimal — biases the results against our hypotheses, by “soaking up” some of the variation that might otherwise be attributed to Centripetalism. Results obtained from using contemporaneous annual scores for per capita GDP, rather than the base year, are virtually identical to those presented here.

conduct two tests for each dependent variable. The first is a “full” model, including all variables discussed above. The second is a reduced-form model including only those controls that pass the threshold of statistical significance ( $p < 0.10$  in two-tailed tests),<sup>76</sup> in the expected direction. We retain the geography-weighted control in all models, regardless of statistical significance. Arguably, there is little need to retain control variables that do not perform well, since they are of little theoretical interest for the task at hand and do not show strong results. Conversely, a fuller specification is less likely to be subject to under-specification problems and presents a more difficult test of our hypothesis. Reassuringly, results for our variable of interest, Centripetalism, are usually robust across both specifications.

The results shown in Table 5 offer strong initial support for our hypothesis. The overall fit of the models is good. Each specification is significant at better than the 0.0001 level, and the  $R^2$  ranges from 0.62 to 0.85. Collectively, these models explain roughly sixty-two to eighty-five percent of the variation in the dependent variables. More specifically, Centripetalism appears to enhance the quality of governance in five out of the six dimensions tested by the Kaufmann indicators. The effect on government effectiveness is a bit weaker, passing the threshold of statistical significance only in the reduced-form model (see Table 5, column 4). But it does come quite close to statistical significance in the full specification (column 3,  $p < 0.11$ ). We suspect that political stability, the only outcome that shows no apparent relationship to Centripetalism, may be affected by a number of exogenous factors for which we have been unable to control (Table 5, columns 5 and 6). Centripetal political institutions, based on the evidence analyzed and presented here, appear to generate substantial improvements in the quality of democratic governance.

These findings, while quite encouraging for our hypothesis, are nevertheless far from definitive. We are constrained by the nature of the dependent variable to conduct only a series of cross-sectional analyses. There are, as we have noted, many more governance indicators that might be tested. And, there are always more controls that might be employed, though it should be added that we have tested many more controls than actually appear in these tables. (Results are stable in additional specification tests.) These caveats notwithstanding, the strength, consistency and robustness of the results presented here offer encouraging evidence that centripetal institutions may generate notable improvements in the quality of governance in democratic polities around the world.

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<sup>76</sup> We retain a small number of control variables that come close to this threshold but that do not quite achieve it, if their deletion interferes with the results for other control variables. In no case did the deletion or inclusion of such a variable affect our Centripetalism variable meaningfully.

Table 5:  
Empirical Tests

<i>Dependent variable:</i>	<b>Corruption Control</b>		<b>Government Effectiveness</b>		<b>Political Stability</b>		<b>Rule of Law</b>		<b>Regulatory Quality</b>		<b>Voice &amp; Accountability</b>	
	<i>Model:</i> 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
<b>Centripetalism</b>	0.069***	0.071***	0.036	0.047**	-0.034	-0.017	0.059***	0.054***	0.054**	0.048**	0.071***	0.062***
(historical)	(0.020)	(0.019)	(0.022)	(0.020)	(0.029)	(0.026)	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.023)	(0.020)	(0.024)	(0.022)
Geography-weighted dependent variable	0.004	0.002	0.015	0.009	0.031	0.018	0.015	0.010	0.036***	0.026***	0.025*	0.030**
(0.014)	(0.013)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.010)	(0.008)	(0.015)	(0.014)	(0.014)
GDP per capita, 1996 (ln)	0.391***	0.366***	0.390***	0.374***	0.339***	0.297***	0.417***	0.373***	0.273***	0.255***	0.255***	0.219***
(0.038)	(0.033)	(0.041)	(0.036)	(0.056)	(0.046)	(0.036)	(0.033)	(0.043)	(0.036)	(0.044)	(0.039)	(0.039)
Socialist legal origin	-0.178	-0.256**	-0.260*	-0.389***	-0.122		-0.022	-0.206*	0.038		0.048	-0.219
(0.144)	(0.113)	(0.155)	(0.121)	(0.199)		(0.135)	(0.112)	(0.162)		(0.166)	(0.134)	
English legal origin	0.055		0.046		-0.103		0.117		0.167	0.135	0.064	
(0.091)		(0.098)		(0.130)		(0.086)		(0.102)	(0.084)	(0.105)		
Latitude (ln)	0.173***	0.136**	0.151**	0.179***	0.227**	0.216***	0.159**	0.166***	0.161**	0.091*	0.096	0.125*
(0.063)	(0.054)	(0.068)	(0.060)	(0.098)	(0.075)	(0.061)	(0.055)	(0.068)	(0.052)	(0.074)	(0.065)	(0.065)
Ethnic fractionalization	0.031		0.170		-0.432		0.107		-0.179		0.105	
(0.180)		(0.194)		(0.280)		(0.171)		(0.207)		(0.208)		
Population (ln)	-0.005		0.026		-0.123***	-0.109***	0.019		-0.046*	-0.078***	0.069***	
(0.021)		(0.023)		(0.034)	(0.030)	(0.020)		(0.024)	(0.020)	(0.024)	(0.024)	
Distance from nearest financial center	0.000		-0.000		-0.000				-0.000		-0.000	
(0.000)		(0.000)		(0.000)				(0.000)		(0.000)	(0.000)	
Oil production	-0.668		-0.524		-0.266		-0.526		-0.350		-0.942	
(0.537)		(0.577)		(0.733)		(0.512)		(0.607)		(0.622)		
Diamond production	0.013		0.016		0.008		0.026		-0.019		0.025	
(0.030)		(0.032)		(0.041)		(0.028)		(0.034)		(0.034)		
Africa	0.111		0.075		0.537**		0.259*		0.403**		0.250	
(0.160)		(0.172)		(0.252)		(0.145)		(0.191)		(0.186)		
Asia	0.046		0.052		0.204		0.262**	0.194*	0.086		0.099	
(0.135)		(0.146)		(0.196)		(0.129)	(0.111)	(0.154)		(0.159)		
Latin America/Carib	-0.235**	-0.314***	-0.265**	-0.360***	0.053		-0.112	-0.247***	0.148		0.345**	
(0.115)	(0.085)	(0.123)	(0.091)	(0.181)		(0.107)	(0.086)	(0.130)		(0.135)		
Protestant	0.008***	0.007***	0.005**		0.005*	0.005**	0.006***	0.006***	0.000		0.003	
(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)		(0.003)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.002)		(0.002)	(0.002)	
Constant	-2.709***	-2.481***	-2.926***	-2.331***	-1.000	-0.928*	-3.218***	-2.499***	-1.184**	-0.811**	-2.417***	-1.235***
(0.442)	(0.295)	(0.475)	(0.320)	(0.665)	(0.479)	(0.410)	(0.293)	(0.514)	(0.390)	(0.513)	(0.353)	(0.353)
<i>Observations</i>	313	323	330	341	296	299	323	333	337	349	334	345
<i>Countries</i>	119	123	119	123	107	108	120	124	121	125	120	124
<i>R-squared</i>	0.85	0.85	0.80	0.80	0.64	0.63	0.85	0.85	0.67	0.65	0.64	0.62
<i>Prob &gt; F</i>	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000	.0000

Between-effects regression. Standard errors in parentheses \* p<10%; p<5%; p<1% Sample Period: 1996-2002 Sample limited to countries that are minimally democratic (Polity2>0).

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