Democracy, ethnoicracy, and consociational demoicracy

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Abstract
This article questions the notion of ‘consociational democracy’. It argues that it rests on shaky ground, empirically and conceptually. As an empirical matter, a consociation is inherently unstable because it tends either to collapse into ethnoicracy (where the power is shared by main ethnic groups so that citizens who do not belong to them are politically marginalized) or to become a non-consociational, liberal democracy. At the conceptual level ‘consociational democracy’ is an impossibility because a polity cannot be both consociational and democratic. The article argues that consociations can be at best demoicracies – that is, polities composed not of a single demos but of multiple demoi. Yet the problem of stability remains. The paper concludes with the suggestion that the problem can be addressed by adopting a weak form of demoicracy – the ‘demoi-within-demos’ constellation – where a thin demos coexists with multiple demoi.

Keywords: consociationalism; centripetalism; democracy; demoicracy; ethnoicracy; demos.