

[DOI: 10.20472/IAC.2015.016.048](https://doi.org/10.20472/IAC.2015.016.048)

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STATUS QUO IN CRISIS: PUBLIC POLICY REGARDING ISRAEL'S ULTRA-ORTHODOX POPULATION IN ISRAEL

Abstract:

Virtually all democracies around the world deal with national, religious and social rifts. This lecture deals with policy-making surrounding such rifts. My case study will be the policy that was shaped for Israel's Ultra-Orthodox population.

Arend Lijphart established the consociationalism model, arguing that political elites succeed in handling social rifts in four different ways: mutual veto, autonomy, wide coalition and proportional allocation of resources (Jarstad, 2001; Lijphart, 1969; 1977; O'Leary & McGarry, 2004). Lijphart's critics argue that the power of consociationalism is restricted to routine situations (Deschouwer, 1994; Hanf, 1993; Horowitz, 2008). The critique demonstrates the need to adapt Lijphart's classical consociationalism model to changing realities.

The rapid growth of the Ultra-Orthodox society in Israel challenged the status quo in various matters such as the Ultra-Orthodox exemption from military service. The lecture deals with two different policy strategies: (1) The Incremental Change attitude mainly used by bureaucrats (2) The Great Reform option, commonly preferred by politicians.

The case studies about policies regarding the Ultra-Orthodox in Israel allow us to construct a new model of consociationalism. When consociationalism reaches a crisis, the political elites tend to deepen the divide between the groups, leading to an impasse. Conversely, non-political elites serve as moderating forces that have the power to generate new norms and bypass the old status quo.

"New consociationalism" is dynamic and aims to generate change that will yield renewed stability while seeking maximum agreement between the fragmented parties. The new model is universal, and the paths proposed in the model are derived from present-day society and politics.

Keywords:

public policy, social rifts, minorities, status quo, reform, politics

JEL Classification: L38, D74, D73