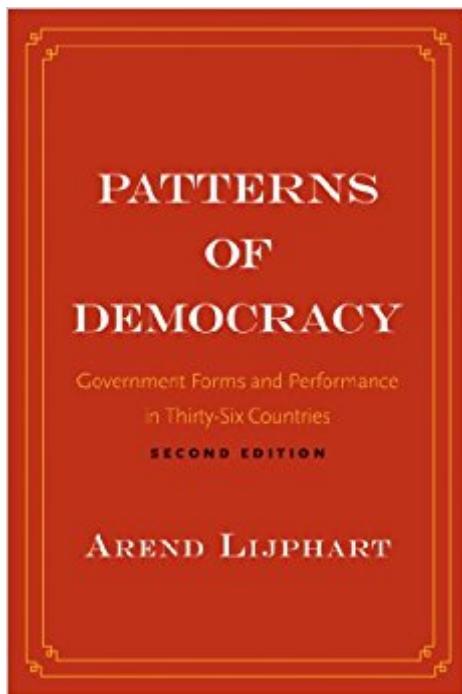


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# Patterns Of Democracy



## Synopsis

In this updated and expanded edition of his classic text, Arend Lijphart offers a broader and deeper analysis of worldwide democratic institutions than ever before. Examining thirty-six democracies during the period from 1945 to 2010, Lijphart arrives at important "and unexpected" conclusions about what type of democracy works best. Praise for the previous edition: "Magnificent. . . . The best-researched book on democracy in the world today." Malcolm Mackerras, *American Review of Politics* "I can't think of another scholar as well qualified as Lijphart to write a book of this kind. He has an amazing grasp of the relevant literature, and he's compiled an unmatched collection of data." Robert A. Dahl, *Yale University* "This sound comparative research . . . will continue to be a standard in graduate and undergraduate courses in comparative politics." Choice

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Arend Lijphart's "Patterns of Democracy" has become a standardized text within the comparative politics subfield, but I think the question needs to be asked "Given all the divergence in regime type

that sprouted with the downfall of the Soviet Union, is the pure Westminster system still a viable starting point for analyzing the points of democratic governance. There's such a regime diversity these days that even regimes of a Westminster character have mutated into systems with two or three different characters. Its' still relevant information particularly when differentiating between presidential and prime ministerial type systems, cabinets, electoral systems etc. But I have to question whether the mixing of systemic elements has left Patterns of Democracy, a dated treatment of a system that has drastically changed.

This is a book recommended by the University of London in their Political Science undergraduate course. I found it well written, clear and easy to go about. There is a conceptual difference between majoritarian and consensus types of democracies that are very distinctively spelled out. You go through the Westminster model, and related types, all the way through the consensual model whereby Switzerland democracy is fully studied. Cabinet decision making and the intricacies of the Central Banks are scrutinized under the two models proposed. The data presented is updated. I read it on my kindle, and underlined the most prominent parts.

Good book for a political science class!

Lijphart seeks to test which type of democratic institutions - consensus or majoritarian - performs most effectively. He tests the performance of these institutions through a statistical analysis of their relative efficiency in three broad fields: macroeconomic management, control of violence, and what he terms the "kinder and gentler" qualities of democracy (293). However, before discussing the results of Lijphart's study, it is necessary to explore what distinguishes the institutions of majoritarian and consensus systems. Lijphart distinguishes between these two types of democracy by illustrating ten institutional differences which divide the typologies. For clarity, the author divides these ten differences into two distinct dimensions: executives-parties, and federal-unitary. The executives-parties dimension addresses "the arrangement of executive power, the party and electoral systems, and interest groups" (3). The federal-unitary dimension illustrates differences in institutional structure of a federated versus unitary government. According to the executives-parties dimension, the majoritarian system, or Westminster model, is found to have a two party system and a strong one-party executive and cabinet. Often the executive is more powerful than his or her legislative counterparts. Furthermore, a majoritarian system often uses a single member district electoral system which can lead to disproportional representation, and has a highly competitive

pluralist interest group system. Lijphart cites Britain and pre-1996 New Zealand as majoritarian systems. Lijphart's consensus democracy varies institutionally from the Westminster model. First, under the majoritarian model, the executive office is often composed of a multi-party power-sharing cabinet or coalition. In addition, power-sharing exists between the executive branch and the legislature the electoral system often promotes proportional representation. Lastly, unlike the highly competitive special interest group system of the Westminster model, a consensus democracy promotes a system of interest group compromise (4). Lijphart uses Switzerland and Germany as examples of consensus democracy. According to the federated-unitary dimension, the Westminster system has a strong, centralized government and a unicameral legislature. In addition, most majoritarian systems possess a very flexible constitution that can readily be amended or changed. Furthermore, in many majoritarian systems, the legislature holds the final word in the constitutionality of legislation, and as such, majoritarian systems do not have a strong system of judicial review. The consensus model, on the other hand, often has a decentralized government, and can be a federated system. Often the legislature is divided into two houses. In addition, the constitution is often rigid, making change difficult. Lastly, the consensus system often has a strong institution of judicial review to monitor the legality of legislation. To test the effectiveness of consensus and majoritarian systems, Lijphart compares the performance of the two democracies on three main categories: macroeconomic management, levels of political violence, and the "kinder, gentler" aspects of democracy. Lijphart's hypothesis "is that consensus democracy produces better results - but without the expectation that the differences will be very strong and significant" (261). When exploring the effectiveness of the two democracies in macroeconomic management, the author operationalizes a number of variables. For the sake of brevity, I will condense the findings into six categories: economic growth, inflation rates, unemployment, strike activity, budget deficits, and freedom index. Lijphart tests the performance of the democracies by using both the executives-parties dimension and federated-unitary dimensions. In the case of economic growth using the executives-parties dimension, there was little difference between majoritarian and consensus democracy. There was a weak negative relationship between consensus democracy and economic but the findings were not statistically significant. This implies that the difference between consensus and majoritarian democracies in regards to economic development is negligible. In regards to inflation, Lijphart finds that consensus democracies have a slightly lower rate of inflation than majoritarian systems. Consensus also performs slightly better than the majoritarian model in regards to unemployment, but again, the differences are slight. Interestingly, Lijphart found a massive relationship between strike activity and consensus democracy. According

to the regression coefficient, levels of strike activity would have been substantially lower in consensus systems than in majoritarian. However, upon further analysis the relationships are not statistically significant and as Lijphart illustrates, the large difference is a result of "big exceptions to the tendency of consensus countries to be less strike-prone than majoritarian democracies" (269). Lastly, Lijphart explores the performance of consensus democracies on budget deficits and economic freedom. Again, the author finds the differences negligible. When using the federated-unitary dimension, Lijphart's finding are similar except when looking at the inflation variable. When comparing consensus democracy on federal-unitary dimension on inflation, Lijphart discovers that a strong negative relationship exists, the relationship is statistically significant, and there is an acceptable t-value. The author explains this relationship by citing that in a consensus democracy the central bank independence. Lijphart writes, "the most important reason why central banks are made strong and independent is to give them the tools to control inflation" (273). In conclusion, the author writes, "the evidence with regard to economic growth and economic freedom is mixed, but with regard to all of the other indicators of economic performance, the consensus democracies have a slightly better record and a significantly better record as far as inflation is concerned" (270). The results regarding the performance of consensus and majoritarian democracies in controlling political violence are also rather vague. Statistically, the consensus system is slightly violent than the majoritarian system. However, Lijphart contends that the significance of the relationship declines when other variables are controlled and outlying observations are removed. Ultimately, Lijphart contends that the statistics show "at least a slightly better performance of the consensus democracies" (271). The last group of variables that Lijphart addresses is what he terms the "kinder, gentler" aspects of democracy. The author contends that consensus systems are more apt to be "kinder and gentler" than their majoritarian counterparts. Lijphart writes, "Consensus democracies demonstrate these kinder and gentler qualities in the following ways: they are more likely to be welfare states; they have a better record with regard to the protection of the environment; they put fewer people in prison, and are less likely use the death penalty; and the consensus democracies in the developed world are more generous with their economic assistance to the developing nations" (275-6). Lijphart measures the effectiveness of consensus intuitions by measuring a number of variables: women's representation, political equality, electoral participation, satisfaction with democracy, government-voter proximity, and accountability and corruption. Statistically, Lijphart's findings when comparing the performance of consensus and majoritarian democracies in regards to the "kinder and gentler" qualities are much more revealing. Lijphart finds that consensus democracy "makes a big difference with regard to almost all of the

indicators of democratic quality and with regard to all of the kinder and gentler qualities" (300). To conclude, Lijphart has found that the institutions of consensus democracies perform slightly better than majoritarian institutions in both macroeconomic management and in the prevention of political violence. However, the differences are slim and arguably irrelevant. But, Lijphart did discover that when looking at the "kinder, gentler" aspects of democracy, such as women's rights, incarceration rates and other, consensus democracy performed substantially better.

We all need knowledge but knowledge that continues to benefit mankind is indispensable. I'm glad I purchased this study book

The book explains the essence of democracy and all its main facets. There is a strong sense of structure in the text. The author brings forth the two different types of democracy: majoritarian and consensus - and introduces the readers to the 36 democracies he uses in his case studies, examples, and as his correlational back-pins. Each of the chapters speak on a certain facet of democracy (cabinets, electoral systems, interest groups, etc.) and compares and contrasts how they look like under the two different types of democracy. The only flaw would be that sometimes statistic after statistic and example after example would be thrown at you and sometimes that made the reading less enjoyable than it could have been. Otherwise, I loved reading it and I thought that democracy was explained very well. The author maintained objectivity and was very considerate in his analysis.

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