

# Political Regimes

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## Aristotle: Politics

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- There are “good”/“true” forms of government, and their corresponding "perversions."
- "The true forms of government, therefore, are those in which the one, or the few, or the many, govern with a view to the common interest; but governments which rule with a view to the private interest, whether of the one or of the few, or of the many, are perversions."
- "Of forms of government in which one rules, we call that which regards the common interests, kingship or royalty; that in which more than one, but not many, rule, aristocracy; and it is so called, either be- cause the rulers are the best men, or because they have at heart the best interests of the state and of the citizens. But when the citizens at large administer the state for the common interest, the government is called by the generic name—a constitution."
- "Tyranny, as I was saying, is monarchy exercising the rule of a master over the political society; oligarchy is when men of property have the government in their hands; democracy, the opposite, when the indigent, and not the men of property, are the rulers."

## Quantitative and Qualitative criteria to classify governments

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	Correct	Deviant
One ruler	Kingship	Tyranny
Few rulers	Aristocracy	Oligarchy
Many rulers	Polity (constitutional government)	Democracy

| Rightful Regimes | Unrightful Regimes |

	How many	End		How many	End
Kingship	One ruler	Common good	Tyranny	One ruler	Self-interest

Aristocracy	Few rulers	Common good	Oligarchy	Few rulers	self-interest
Polity	Many rulers	Common good	Democracy	Many rulers	self-interest

Aristotle likes Polity because it is a mixture: it takes from the oligarchy that the public offices are elected (not by drawn), and from the democracy, it takes that the offices don't depend on income: A constitution based on the middle class is the mean between the extremes of oligarchy (rule by the rich) and democracy (rule by the poor).

The polity is also a "middle way": the rich don't know how to follow orders, but the poor are too servile. It's controlled by a numerous middle class.

## Lijphart: Patterns of Democracy: Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries

- Democracies can be placed within a majoritarian-consensus continuum.
- Ten Differences between the two
  1. Concentration of executive power in single-party majority cabinets versus executive power-sharing in broad multiparty coalitions.
  2. Executive-legislative relationships in which the executive is dominant versus executive-legislative balance of power.
  3. Two-party versus multiparty systems.
  4. Majoritarian and disproportional electoral systems versus proportional representation.
  5. Pluralist interest group systems with free-for-all competition among groups versus coordinated and "corporatist" interest group systems aimed at compromise and concertation.
- "pure or almost pure majoritarian democracies are actually quite rare-limited to the United Kingdom, New Zealand (until 1996), and the former British colonies in the Caribbean."
- "Moreover, as this book shows, consensus democracy may be considered more democratic than majoritarian democracy in most respects."

# The Westminster Model of Democracy

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- In this book I use the term Westminster model interchangeably with majoritarian model (British parliamentary system). // Palace of Westminster in London.
- Cases: the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Barbados.

## The Westminster Model (United Kingdom):

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1. **Concentration of executive power in one-party and bare-majority cabinets.** The most powerful organ of British government is the cabinet. Composed of members of the party that has the majority of seats in the House of Commons, and the minority is not included. Coalition cabinets are rare. "Because in the British two-party system the two principal parties are of approximately equal strength, the party that wins the elections usually represents no more than a narrow majority, and the minority is relatively large. Hence the British one-party and bare-majority cabinet is the perfect embodiment of the principle of majority rule."
2. **Cabinet dominance.** Parliamentary system of government: cabinet is dependent on the confidence of Parliament // the cabinet is composed of the leaders of a cohesive majority party in the House of Commons.
3. **Two-party system.** British politics is dominated by two large parties: the Conservative party and the Labour party.
4. **Majoritarian and disproportional system of elections.** Elected according to the plurality method, which in Britain is usually referred to as the "first past the post" system (the candidate with the majority vote or, if there is no majority, with the largest minority vote wins). This system tends to produce highly disproportional results.
5. **Interest group pluralism.** "Free-for-all" pluralism. It contrasts with interest group corporatism in which regular meetings take place between the representatives of the government, labor unions, and employers' organizations to seek agreement on socioeconomic policies. Pluralism, in contrast, means a multiplicity of interest groups that exert pressure on the government in an uncoordinated and competitive manner. Britain's interest group system is clearly pluralist.
6. **Unitary and centralized government.** Local governments perform a series of important functions, but they are the creatures of the central government.
7. **Concentration of legislative power in a unicameral legislature.** The United Kingdom deviates from the pure majoritarian model. Parliament consists of two chambers: House of Commons (elected) and House of Lords (members of the hereditary nobility and so-called life peers, appointed by the government; only power: power to delay legislation). Highly asymmetric bicameral system may also be called near-unicameralism.

- i. *Interesting*: in the Labour party, there is strong sentiment in favor of the abolition of the House of Lords. "it could be decided by a simple majority in the House of Commons and, if the Lords objected, there merely is a one-year delay."
8. **Constitutional flexibility.** Britain has a constitution that is "unwritten" (there is not one written document). These are a number of basic laws-like the Magna Carta of 1215, the Bill of Rights of 1689, common law principles, customs, and conventions. Important implication: it makes the constitution completely flexible (it can be changed by Parliament by regular majorities---instead of the supermajorities---in the same way as any other laws).
9. **A central bank controlled by the executive.** the Bank of England has indeed not been able to act independently and has instead been under the control of the cabinet.

## The Consensus Model (Switzerland, Belgium):

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1. **Executive power-sharing in broad coalition cabinets.** The Belgian constitution has a formal requirement that the executive include representatives of the large linguistic groups. Belgium has a parliamentary form of government. Belgian cabinets are often short-lived attests to their relatively weak position. [From another source: Belgium chose new prime minister after a world record of 19 months without government in 2011].
2. **Multiparty system.** Both Switzerland and Belgium have multiparty systems; no party has the majority. Lijphart explains the reasons for why these two countries have a multiparty system: "The first is that the two countries are plural societies, divided along several lines of cleavage. This multiplicity of cleavages is reflected in the multidimensional character of their party systems." The cleavages are religion, socioeconomic and language. "The second explanation for the emergence of multiparty systems in Switzerland and Belgium is that their proportional electoral systems."
3. **Proportional representation.** The basic aim of proportional representation (PR) is to divide the parliamentary seats among the parties in proportion to the votes they receive.

## U.S.

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1. The executive (President and Vice President) are Republican. *Is not parliamentary or semi presidential.*
2. Cabinet is mostly Republican.
3. Two-party system. **not too representative.**
4. Majoritarian (non-proportional) electoral system. **Would a PR system work in the US?**
5. Social partnership between the interests of capital and labour, involving collective bargaining between representatives of employers and of labour mediated by the government at the

national level. In contrast to a market economy which operates through competition:

Pluralism (interests are free to compete for influence), usually via **lobbying**.

6. Unitary and centralized government. No, the U.S. is federal.
7. Concentration of legislative power in a unicameral legislature. No, it has the Senate.
8. Constitutional flexibility? Article Five of the United States Constitution describes the process whereby the Constitution may be altered. Altering the Constitution consists of proposing an amendment or amendments and subsequent ratification. Amendments may be proposed either by the Congress (with a two-thirds vote in both the House of Representatives and the Senate) or by a convention of states called for by two-thirds of the state legislatures. To become part of the Constitution, an amendment must be ratified by either—as determined by Congress—the legislatures of three-quarters of the states or state ratifying conventions in three-quarters of the states. The vote of each state (to either ratify or reject a proposed amendment) carries equal weight, regardless of a state's population or length of time in the Union.
9. A central bank controlled by the executive. Not, it's independent. They control monetary policy, and independent banks are widely considered to be better at controlling inflation and maintaining price stability than banks that are dependent on the executive.
  - A. However, in "Independent but Not Indifferent: Partisan Bias in Monetary Policy at the Fed:"
    - A. The Fed acts in ways that promote the (re)election of Republican presidential candidates.
    - B. The Fed's main policy tool, the Federal Funds Rate (FFR), declines as elections approach when Republicans control the White House, but rises before elections when the sitting President is a Democrat.
    - C. The Federal Reserve cares about inflation, but only when the President is a Democrat.