

# This Week's Citation Classic®

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Lijphart A. *The politics of accommodation: pluralism and democracy in The Netherlands*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1968. 222 p. [University of California, Berkeley, CA]

This book describes Dutch society as deeply divided into distinct and mutually antagonistic religious and ideological groups. In spite of these sharp cleavages, stable democracy could be achieved by overarching cooperation at the elite level and by allowing each group as much autonomy as possible. [The *SSCI*® indicates that this book has been cited in over 185 publications.]

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The most important reason my study of Dutch politics has attracted so much attention is that it is more than a case study of one small country. It has a message of general theoretical and practical value: contrary to earlier theorizing, stable democracy is possible in deeply divided societies if the leaders of the contending groups are willing and able to systematically counteract the tendencies toward conflict.

Another favorable factor was that, while my fieldwork obviously had to be done in The Netherlands, I did almost all of the thinking and writing while I was teaching at the University of California, Berkeley. It was a great help to have to look at Dutch politics from a distance; it enabled me to avoid being distracted by minor day-to-day developments and to focus instead on the "big picture."

A slight disadvantage of this geographical distance was that I underestimated the political changes that, after decades of great con-

tinuity, began to take place just as I was completing my manuscript in 1967. In retrospect, however, I believe that this underestimate was less serious than my judgment in the book's second edition that these changes were "revolutionary"—a judgment influenced by my too close proximity to the Dutch scene during my 10-year tenure at the University of Leiden from 1968 to 1978.<sup>1</sup>

The book's conclusion that there is no incompatibility between democracy and deep social cleavages has become the major theme of my scholarly work. My books *Democracy in Plural Societies*<sup>2</sup> and *Democracies*<sup>3</sup> are elaborations and refinements of this message in a general comparative context. I have also written a book that discusses it as a solution for the problem of South Africa.<sup>4</sup>

I am pleased, but not really surprised, that the book has become a *Citation Classic*. It has inspired studies of countries in all parts of the world. It has also been subjected to quite a bit of criticism, some of which has led to significant revisions in my arguments—but none of it has weakened the thrust and value of my basic message. My 1985 book on South Africa contains a chapter in which I try to answer my critics in a systematic and comprehensive way.

The book turned out to sell well. As a result, the University of California Press asked me to prepare an updated second edition, mentioned earlier, for publication as a paperback; it appeared in 1975. I also prepared a Dutch version, which was published, like the original English version, in 1968. I believe that I can say, without too much immodesty, that it has achieved the status of a classic in Dutch political science. It has also become a standard textbook in Holland. Its seventh edition was published this year.<sup>5</sup> In 1984 the Dutch political-science journal *Acta Politica* devoted a special issue to its basic theme.<sup>6</sup>

1. Lijphart A. *The politics of accommodation: pluralism and democracy in The Netherlands*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975. 231 p. (Cited 60 times.)
2. ———. *Democracy in plural societies: a comparative exploration*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977. 248 p. (Cited 130 times.)
3. ———. *Democracies: patterns of majoritarian and consensus government in twenty-one countries*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984. 229 p. (Cited 40 times.)
4. ———. *Power-sharing in South Africa*. Berkeley, CA: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1985. 182 p.
5. ———. *Verzuiling, pacificatie en kentering in de Nederlandse politiek (Denominational segregation, pacification and change in the politics of The Netherlands)*. Haarlem, The Netherlands: Bocht, 1988. 224 p.
6. van Schendelen M P C M, ed. *Consociationalism, pillarization and conflict-management in the Low Countries*. (Whole issue.) *Acta Politica* 19(1), 1984. 175 p.