

Parliamentary Strengthening: an annotated bibliography

The Parliamentary Studies Centre at the Australian National University will progressively list on this site relevant research on parliamentary strengthening, beginning with this summary of published articles from the UK Journal of Legislative Studies since the year 2000. This listing has been prepared by Avinash Kumar, a PhD scholar at the Crawford School of Economics and Government, Australian National University.

Journal of Legislative Studies

Norton, P 2000, ‘Reforming parliament in the United Kingdom: The report of the commission to strengthen parliament’, *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Autumn, vol. 6, no. 3, pp 1 – 14.

This article highlights the main issues contained in the report “Strengthening Parliament” which was prepared by a Commission setup by the then British Leader of the Opposition, William Hague and chaired by Professor Philip Norton. The Commission was appointed to ‘examine the causes of the decline in the effectiveness of parliament in holding executives to account and to make proposals for strengthening democratic control of government’. The Report was published in July 2000. In this article, Norton outlines the committee’s recommendations.

Hamm K E, Hedlund, R D and Martorano N 2001, ‘Structuring Committee Decision-Making: Rules and Procedures in US State Legislatures’, *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Summer, vol. 7, no 2, pp 13 – 34.

The goal of this article is to examine the evolution of committee system structures in US state legislatures so that future research will be able to test current theories of institutional change. The major conclusion of this research is that US state legislatures have formalised the structure of their committee systems over the course of the twentieth century and that many similarities and few differences exist in committee system

structure between US state legislative upper and lower chambers. Further, this article discovers that four distinct dimensions – property rights, codification of basic structure, internal democracy and minority party rights – of committee system structures exist in US state legislative chambers.

Borthwick, R L 2001, ‘Methods of Composition of Second Chambers’, *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Spring, vol. 7, no 1, pp 19 – 26.

This article outlines the methods of selection of Second Chambers in major legislatures. The findings contribute towards strengthening of second chambers by specifically focusing on the size, the length of term, the basis of selection and the selection criteria. The study also points out that the members of most second chambers in major legislatures are mostly elected. However, there are a few exceptions.

Patterson, S C and Mughan, A 2001, ‘Fundamentals of Institutional Design: The Functions and Powers of Parliamentary Second Chambers’, *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Spring, vol. 7, no 1, pp 39 – 60.

This article assists parliamentary strengthening by analyzing the functions and power of the second chamber through investigation of their symmetrical and asymmetrical designs; their power in federal and unitary systems; their executive authority; their power in making laws and its overall internal structure. It gives a preliminary outlook of each aspect.

Wheeler-Booth, M 2001, ‘Procedure: A Case Study of the House of Lords’, *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Spring, vol. 7, no 1, pp 77 – 92.

The House of Lords in Britain has been used as a role model to strengthen other legislatures around the world. This study describes briefly the procedure of the Lords in the reign of James I in 1621 and later moves three and a half centuries to the period 1960-99. It also describes the procedures used after this period to changes brought before the passage of the House of Lords Act 1999 and the exclusion of the majority of hereditary

peers. Finally, it examines the procedural problems of the current House of Lords. The article would benefit those involved in strengthening new parliaments.

Scully, R 2001, 'Dealing with Big Brother: Relations with the First Chamber', *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Spring, vol. 7, no 1, pp 93 – 104.

By exploring the formal and informal relationship between two chambers, this article adds more towards parliamentary strengthening in a bicameral system. It argues that the partisan composition and party unity has a significant role in determining the inter-relations between the two chambers.

Shephard, M., McGarvey, N 2001, 'New Scottish Parliament, New Scottish Parliamentarians?', *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Summer , vol. 7, no. 2, pp 79 – 104.

Political parties play a significant role in strengthening the overall function of parliament. This article compares the Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) with Westminster MPs. The findings of this study highlight that Scottish MPs are more representative of ethnicity and the working class in Scotland. The authors conclude that for effective representation, political parties should address the issue of 'microcosmic representation' rather than specifically focusing on gender issues.

Russell, M 2001, 'Responsibilities of Second Chambers: Constitutional and Human Rights Safeguards, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp 61 – 76.

This article discusses the constitutional and human rights roles of second chambers in seven Western democracies - Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy and Spain. The lessons from these parliaments can help strengthen other upcoming parliaments which have problems relating to human rights.

Mendez – Lago and Martinez A 2002, ‘Political Representation in Spain: An empirical Analysis of the Perception of Citizens and MPs, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, vol. 8, Spring, no. 1, pp 63 - 90

Overall, a good understanding of ‘political representation’ by Members of Parliament and citizens strengthens the role of parliament in a democracy. This article analyses the perceptions and the level of satisfaction of the citizens and MPs in relation to the political representation in Spain.

Arter, D 2002, ‘On Assessing the Strength and Weakness in Parliamentary Committee Systems: Some Preliminary Observations on New Scottish Parliament’, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, Summer, pp. 93 - 197

By taking the Scottish Committee System as the case study, this article highlights the limitations of the existing methods of measuring the strengths and weakness of committees in legislatures. It further suggests a new method of analyzing committee strengths in Scotland and in other legislatures.

Bandeira-Leston, C and Freire, A 2003, ‘Internalising the lessons of stable democracy: The Portuguese Parliament’, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 9, no. 2, Summer, pp. 56 – 84.

The Portuguese Parliament, which was once considered ‘unstable’, has transformed itself dramatically. Since the end of 1980’s, parliamentary strengthening measures have not only brought stability in Portugal but also strengthened the practice of democracy. This article highlights this major transformation from 1970/80’s to the 1990’s/2000s and other changes that accompanied it. The Portuguese parliament can be viewed as a role model for other parliaments which are considered ‘unstable’.

Norton, P and Leston-Bandeira, C 2003, ‘The impact of democratic practice on the Parliaments of Southern Europe’, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 9, no. 2, Summer, pp. 177 – 185.

The practice of democracy induces numerous changes to strengthen the institution of parliament. This article highlights four major changes – style of representation, constitutional change, internal organization and relationship with government – that have taken place since the practice of democracy in the five Southern European countries of Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Turkey.

Arter, D 2003, ‘Committee Cohesion and the Corporate Dimension of Parliamentary Committees: A Comparative Analysis’, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 9, no. 4, Winter, pp. 73 – 87.

Committee cohesion adds strength to parliamentary oversight functions. This article analyses the merits and demerits of committee cohesion by examining committees in three West European parliaments – Sweden, Iceland and Scotland. The study notes that the issue of committee cohesion is important for these parliaments because they have the right to initiate legislations.

Vatter, A 2005 ‘Bicameralism and policy performance: The Effects of Cameral Structure in Comparative Perspective’, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 11, no. 2, Summer, pp. 194- 215.

By addressing the relationship between cameral structure and policy performance of OECD countries, this article concludes that bicameral structures have strong negative effect. Students of parliamentary strengthening should note the challenging findings here: that bicameralism does not minimize executive dominance or promote stability within political systems or improve the quality of democracy or economic performance. Furthermore it reduces the women’s success in elections.

Jackson, N 2006, ‘An MP’s role in the Internet Era – The Impact of E-newsletters’, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, Vol. 12, no. 2, June, pp. 223 – 242

Internet technology has contributed towards parliamentary strengthening. This article highlights the changing role of MPs in the internet era and how they can take advantage of the internet technology. By studying MP's who are using e-newsletters, this study shows that it has benefitted them to fulfill both constituency and non-constituency roles.

Damgaard, E and Jensen, H 2006, 'Assessing strength and weakness in legislatures: The case of Denmark', *Journal of Legislative Studies*, vol. 12, no. 3-4, September – December, pp 426- 442.

This article assesses the policy power of the Danish parliament (*Folketinget*) in the context of multiparty coalition governments by using three sets of indicators. These includes the number and success rate of bills and resolutions proposed by the opposition parties compared with the success of government initiatives over a period of thirty years; the relative success rate of government and opposition amendments to executive bills; and lastly an analysis of various case studies which contribute towards the policy-making process. The authors argue that in a multiparty polity the opposition parties have some influence over the policy formulation as the support for a policy(s) to some extent has to reflect the consensus of all parties.

Dai, X 2007, 'Political ethics Online: Parliamentarians' Use of email in Europe', *Journal of Legislative Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3, September, pp 458- 476.

Despite contributing towards parliamentary strengthening, internet technology also has its shortcomings. This article investigates the importance, purpose and ethical issues relating to the use of emails by the parliamentarians. This study reveals that the positive view of emails by the parliamentarians has not been reciprocated the same way by the citizens. Above all, the parliamentarians themselves manage emails without any standard code of conduct.

Dai, X and Norton, P 2007,' Parliamentary Democracy Online: Lessons from Europe', *Journal of Legislative Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3, September, pp 477- 482.

By studying four parliaments - British, European, Portuguese and Swedish – the authors argue that though internet technology has strengthened the performance of MPs, policy makers should consider the other issues such as the ethics which go along with the internet usage.

Kaiser, A 2008, ‘Parliamentary Opposition in Westminster Democracies: Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand’, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, vol. 14, no. 1/2, March/June, pp. 20- 45.

The nature of opposition within a democracy contributes towards its parliamentary strength. This article analyses three dimensions of oppositions in four Westminster democracies by using an ‘actor-centered institutionalist approach’. The three dimensions include: institutional opportunity structures for opposition parties; parties’ policy positions and the potential for cohesive behavior by non-governmental parties; and bicameralism and federalism. This study points out that there are numerous patterns of parliamentary opposition in Westminster democracies.