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Democracy for Realists Book Review

An individual's ability to express the different issues in society through literature writing helps address human interaction practices and influences. The driving force for the composition of literary masterpieces in society is behind the writing of a book or literary art. Democracy is one key aspect of society, with diverse societies and organizations employing its use, including the United States. The book, written by Larry M. Bartels and Christopher H. Achen, "Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Governments," provides a window into the different influences of democracy in the United States. An analysis of the authors, themes,

strengths, and weaknesses of the book helps understand the motives and impacts of democracy in the United States and related entities.

Book's Authors

One of the book's authors is Christopher H. Achen. Christopher is an American professor in the Political Science Department at Princeton University in New Jersey. Markedly, his political science interests lie in different topics, including democracy, public opinion, and elections (12min Team). Christopher's approach to politics through political methodology in understanding empirical democratic theories is at the heart of his knowledge, understanding, and political science career. Moreover, Christopher's experience and achievements in political science relating to American politics inform his authorship of books, including his co-authorship of "Democracy for Realists."

Larry M. Bartels is the co-author of "Democracy for Realists" due to his affiliation with Christopher Achen. An American political scientist, Larry has experience in many issues of the country's politics. He holds different positions in influential aspects of American politics, such as the Chair of the American Academy of Arts at Vanderbilt University (12min Team). Larry is also a member of the American Philosophical Society with significant contributions to understanding democracy and public policy related to America's politics. He has experience as an author of political issues, with significant successes that increase his arguments alongside Christopher Achen in the book under review (12min Team).

"Democracy for Realists"

The book's title reflects the arguments and themes that it presents regarding democracy in different societies. The title relates the elements of democracy that include democracy and

governments' formation as a direct effect. The book's title also reflects the arguments of realists, individuals who approach democracy through the reality of its application, implications, and impacts in society (12min Team). The title is a window to understanding the authors' arguments and drawing attention to the book's ideas. It highlights the role of elections as a tool for democracy to introduce different administrations that form governments and provides a realist assessment of such processes (Deller).

Major Theses from the Book

The major thesis that the book presents is the inability of individuals to realize the inapplicability of the folk view of democracy (Achen and Bartels 79). The authors appreciate the role of democracy but explain that its approach to governance is an intellectual view from the 19th Century that does not fit modern contexts. The thesis explores the irony in applying democracy because it claims that citizens are the direct determinants of governance and can determine leaders and governments (Achen and Bartels 14). However, the practice of democracy strays from these principles of representation and direct determination of leaders because other factors, such as private financiers of politics, have a significant influence on democracy in today's politics. This thesis's development relates to citizens' changing paradigms as rational beings and their role in electing leaders and developing governments (Achen and Bartels 10).

The book also presents the thesis of influences of democracy from other factors away from facts. The thesis focuses on American politics and the factors that make individuals vote for a particular candidate. The thesis draws explanations of the role of gender, ethnicity, and other forms of identities as factors that steer the current understanding of democracy and its vehicle, elections, to select leaders and governments (Achen and Bartels 220). It explains that American citizens, like others from most democracies, influence individuals to vote without understanding

their policies or manifestos. Rather, citizens elect leaders based on how they identify with them, by considering ethnicity, religion, gender, and other differing attributes (Achen and Bartels 229). In doing so, the book's thesis explains the deviation of democracy from fact-based to an identity-based political system.

The book also includes a thesis on the shortsightedness and external influences to elections in current times that erode democratic practices. It particularly develops the concept of retroactively voting against incumbent leaders based on happenings during their regime outside their control. The thesis explores the psychological aspect of cognitive dissonance that creates internal dilemmas in choosing leaders and the implication of such influences to democracy (Achen and Bartels 269). The books explain that most voters are understandably uninformed on political issues and form the huge percentage of voters, relying on knowledge from six months before the election date. The thesis highlights that current practices of democracy in the United States rely on shortsighted approaches in analyzing a leader's accomplishment rather than assessing their performance throughout their term in office (Achen and Bartels 174).

Strengths of Book's Arguments

The book's arguments to accompany its main theses are credible in analyzing their relation to the context under discussion. The book includes one chapter to discuss the congruence between voters and policies and describe direct democracy in the United States. These chapters reiterate the thesis on the inapplicability of the folk view on democracy by explaining the pitfalls in applying democracy in the United States (Achen and Bartels 213). The chapters provide examples from applying the folk view of democracy in the 19th and 20th Centuries and political changes in the 21st Century. For instance, the chapter reviews the influences behind the writings

of James Madison in the Federalist papers to reiterate the changes in the roles of American citizens since the declaration of Independence (Achen and Bartels 230).

The book also provides arguments on retrospective accountability in the United States and the world to explain citizens' inadequacies in democratic elections. The book goes back and forth in describing democratic policies in the United States and the world by describing economic voting issues. It reiterates the book's thesis that explains voters' reliance on identity with political contestants rather than ideologies and facts based on their manifestos and policies (Achen and Bartels 208). These arguments also enhance the credibility of the authors' arguments by explaining the American voting behavior, such as a Democrat assuming the affiliation because of parental influence. The arguments also encompass aspects of blind retrospection by highlighting the inheritance of ideologies that affect people's political attitudes, making voters elect candidates based on ethnicity, gender, and other identities rather than facts (Achen and Bartels 269).

Three chapters from the book provide arguments on voters' psychology and its influence in elections as part of democracy. They highlight cognitive dissonance as a psychological factor for voters and leaders and its influence on each entity's decisions. These arguments relate to the thesis on shortsightedness and external influence on citizens' voting behavior within the United States and other democratic systems across the world (Achen and Bartels 80). For instance, the authors provide arguments on group identities, social identities, and political psychology that reiterate shortsightedness influences perpetuating negative forms of democratic governance. It highlights issues, such as the failure of incumbent presidents by explaining the relationship between voter disinterest in politics, inadequate political knowledge, and influences from private financiers of politics (Achen and Bartels 269).

Limitations of Book's Arguments

The authors provide cogent arguments against the implementation of democracy, as is the case in the United States' current administration. However, they fall short of describing the influences of media on democracy and its practices, such as elections. Markedly, the rise of social media and in-depth social media coverages of elections and candidate history in the 21st Century allows for voter education to significant amounts (Achen and Bartels 107). Thus, it is not entirely correct to state that most voters do not have the necessary information on politicians. There are numerous efforts by the media station to assess leaders' achievements and failures that help scrutinize the democratic process. It is essential to appreciate these changes in the 21st Century that lower the spread of misinformation and propaganda that negatively affect the democratic process (Deller).

The book also provides recommendations on the various approaches to solving the democratic challenges in the United States and related democratic systems with the same challenges (Achen and Bartels 302). Comparing the breadth of the recommendations, it is evident that the book's conclusion provides a hasty wrap-up of the solutions to the current problems. Throughout the book, the authors identify multiple challenges to democracy and highlight examples that accompany statistical analyses. Thus, the recommendations fall short of providing a roadmap for the implementation of positive change. This makes the recommendations cursory and inconsistent in summarizing the challenges that the book highlights (Deller).

Conclusion

To sum up, “Democracy for Realists” provides intricate details to the challenges of democracy and the need for change in implementing democratic processes, such as elections. It is necessary to analyze such books to obtain necessary information on ways to solve challenges in democratic governance. Thus, the analysis of “Democracy for Realists” is a step closer to solving these challenges because it allows for their identifications.

Works Cited

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