

# **The Changing Balance of Political Power in Finland**

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## **Brief description**

The book analyses the distribution of political power in Finland since the 1970s. The objective is not simply to extrapolate change within and between governing institutions and political parties, but also to understand the causal mechanisms explaining this significant period of constitutional and political reform. The analysis is based on extensive data and empirical indicators and, for the main part, covers the period from 1970s to the present day. The central research questions answered in the volume are:

- How is power distributed within and between national political institutions (parliament, government, bureaucracy, president, parties)?
- How has the constellation of political power changed since the 1970s?
- Which factors, domestic and international, explain this change?

The volume makes three important contributions to the literature.

1. While there is a voluminous scholarship on the political systems of individual European countries, this manuscript stands out in terms of both its empirical ambition and longitudinal coverage. Normally case studies of political systems are either textbooks or tend to emphasize particular institutions. However, this volume includes all national-level political institutions (parliament, elections, government, bureaucracy, president, political parties) AND is based on a systematic empirical design with the data covering the period from the 1970s until the present day. This makes it possible to examine in detail power relations within and between political institutions, how these relations have changed, and what explains this change.

2. From a comparative perspective, the case of Finland provides important insights into how constitutional reform is reflected in the rules and behaviour of political institutions. After all, the political systems of democratic countries are remarkably stable. Even when societies experience significant structural change, the impact of such socio-economic transformation is mainly limited to the party system. Constitutional change regarding political institutions is much less frequent and is often linked to democratization or major domestic crisis as in Central and Eastern Europe. The more affluent 'Western' European countries, on the other hand, display considerable constitutional stability. Finland is a noteworthy exception to this rule. Indeed, Finland is a rare example of a democratic country that has experienced major constitutional reform peacefully without domestic conflict. A period of far-reaching constitutional change, which culminated in the new constitution that entered into force in 2000, curtailed presidential powers and brought the Finnish political system closer to a normal parliamentary democracy. Hence the Finnish case offers a unique setting for examining if and how constitutional change shapes the distribution of power inside and among political institutions.

3. This volume constitutes the first English-language text with a broad view of power relations in Finnish politics. While Finland is included in comparative studies of Nordic politics, there are currently no books available that would offer a comprehensive analysis of the Finnish case. Finland can of course be considered a small, peripheral European country, but beyond above-mentioned constitutional change it has several features – such as unusually broad governments, open list electoral system, effective system of parliamentary scrutiny in EU affairs, and active role of women in politics – that are distinctive and of special interest to foreign readers. Besides, Finland is both a member of the EU and the Eurozone, and this should ensure demand for a text on its political system.

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