

**MAJORITY** governments, because they control a majority in the legislature, are unlikely to be defeated and will serve out their full term—in this respect they are very stable.



WHICH  
MEANS  
THAT

**MINORITY** governments constantly face the possibility of defeat and may not be able to serve out their full term—in this sense they can be quite vulnerable.



A **MAJORITY** government will control the policy and legislative agendas, and be free do to whatever it wishes, subject to its sensitivity to public opinion, its desire to be re-elected, and the effectiveness of any delaying or blocking measures available to the opposition.

WHICH  
MEANS  
THAT



WHICH  
MEANS  
THAT

A **MINORITY** government can only survive with the co-operation of another party or parties, making deals on an issue-by-issue basis, or in sustained legislative partnership with a like-minded party.



Majority governments promote oppositional legislative politics—any party excluded from government, with limited input to the policy process and no control over the legislative agenda, must settle for the frustrating task of opposing all government policy while waiting for the next election.

WHICH  
MEANS  
THAT



WHICH  
MEANS  
THAT

A **MINORITY** government may also promote oppositional legislative politics, if it has reason to believe that its defeat is unlikely, or, if it wishes to engineer its own defeat in order to bring about an election it believes it can win. A minority government that intends to govern for any length of time, though, may find it is better served by seeking partnerships and making compromises that accommodate other parties' positions to gain their support—in short, pursuing a more consensual politics.



While a **MAJORITY** government sounds democratic, it very well may not be. At the very least, it limits the popular input to government to the segments of society that supported the governing party. How representative the government is will be influenced by how much its support reflects the different interests in civil society.

WHICH  
MEANS  
THAT



Government by a party with a **MINORITY** of the seats may seem undemocratic, but if such a government remains in power because it receives a majority of votes in the legislature, a majority that is composed of the votes of two or more parties, it may be more representative of the population at large than a majority government.

Figure 6.2