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**DIRECT & REPRESENTATIVE
DEMOCRACY: ARE THEY NECESSARILY
OPPOSED?**

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Direct & Representative Democracy: Are They Necessarily Opposed?

SUMMARY

This article argues that the rise of political parties has rendered classical distinctions between direct and representative democracy largely obsolete. This is particularly true for representative democracy where rather than selecting candidates as individuals, electors are now asked to choose between party policy packages. Party-mediated rather than unmediated policy voting is also the order of the day so far as direct democracy is concerned. The real contrast between the two thus boils down to periodic voting on medium term party programmes versus frequent votes on individual policy. We argue here that there is a place for both in any modern democracy that truly aims at creating a necessary connection between public policy and popular preferences.

1. Democracy, Representation & Parties

What distinguishes democracy from other political regimes is its creation of 'a necessary correspondence between acts of governance and the equally weighted felt interests of citizens with regard to these acts' (May 1978, as refined by Saward, 1988, 51). A key element in the definition is the necessary correspondence. It is included to answer the stock criticism that any altruistic decision-maker would serve citizens' interests as well, or better than, democracy. Pointing this up in terms of our analysis here, would not autonomous and disinterested representatives make better decisions for citizens than citizens themselves? The *Federalist Papers* (1787-8: 1911) certainly say so, and J.S. Mill (1861: 1910) inclines that way.

Our definition however holds that a simple correspondence of interests and policy is not enough. What distinguishes real democracy is an institutional mechanism for ensuring the correspondence. That mechanism is the democratic election. The centrality of elections to democracy stems from the fact that they provide a recurring opportunity for citizens to express and empower their interests in policy.

Within this context classical theories of representation seem only barely, if at all, democratic – a point well recognised by Madison (1787-8: 1911, 45) whose proposals for representation were advanced as an alternative to democracy. The power to select representatives and punish them retrospectively through de-selection gives electors a certain influence in enforcing their interests. In between elections however the representatives are free to vote in the public policies they and not electors want.

Direct democracy on the other hand involves electors in directly selecting the policies which suit them. In this comparison direct democracy emerges quite

clearly as the more democratic alternative. Recognition of this is what has driven movements for radical constitutional reform which aim at institutionalising direct policy-voting in the shape of referendums and initiatives.

Typically radical populist movements also seek to exclude parties and other intermediary institutions from such popular votes, seeing them as intrinsically bound up with the representative system – barriers to rather than facilitators of popular expressions of opinion (following Rosseau, 1762: 1958 237-440). This is ironic since parties in the modern period have been the agents which transformed representative democracy from a system for electing proxy decision-makers into one which puts policy-decisions directly before the electorate. They have done this by disciplining their Parliamentary representatives into acting as a single voting block committed to the medium term policy programme central to their efforts to attract votes. Candidates are no longer elected on their personal merits but on the basis of their willingness to support the policy programme.

Representative democracy has thus been ‘hollowed out’ by political parties and changed into something much more like direct democracy. In light of this it is surprising that so much of the debate on their relative merits is still conducted in outdated terms of autonomous representative deliberation – removed from party and popular pressures – contrasted with unmediated popular voting inflamed with the passions of the moment and duped by hidden interests behind seemingly innocuous proposals. There are some situations which approach this worst case scenario but to conduct the whole debate as though it pitted the US Senate against Californian initiatives, ignoring party mediation elsewhere, is simply to distort its terms of reference. Parties have penetrated both representative and direct democracy and subverted the stark classical contrasts between them.

Our discussion below supports this point by elaborating on the nature of modern direct democracy and modern representative democracy. We start with the case for and against direct democracy before proposing an up to date interpretation of representative democracy in the shape of the 'median party mandate'. Such a mandate can only be said to work on the central issues in debate however leaving space for individual policy voting on issues outside normal Left-Right differences – constitutional, ethnic, territorial and environmental issues to name only a few. A possible arrangement which accommodates both programmatic voting in general elections and policy voting on specific issues is sketched at the end of the discussion.

2. PROS AND CONS OF DIRECT DEMOCRACY

As we have seen, direct democracy, in the sense of the people directly voting on the questions Parliaments generally vote on, has a driving appeal in the sense of forming the most obvious institutionalisation of democracy itself. If the object is to reinforce the 'necessary link' between popular preferences and public policy, what better than to have the latter directly decided by the citizens? Even critics and opponents of direct democracy accept this argument but argue against the arrangement because of other, negative features - difficulty/impossibility of achievement, especially since we already have policy voting on overall programs; incapacity of citizens to make detailed policy decisions; and instability (as one popular majority succeeds another). Various forms which these objections take, together with counter-responses, are summarised in Table 1.

(TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE)

We have already dealt with the point that policy voting occurs in 'representative' (or party) democracies today – albeit infrequently and on general

programs rather than on individual policies. This may produce different outcomes from individual policy-voting, a point we will pursue below.

A more general objection is the impossibility of gathering all the citizens of any modern State together for discussion and voting of proposals. This is relevant of course only if one considers face to face discussion the only legitimate form of debate, and discounts the referendums and initiatives traditionally carried on in Switzerland through Press and postal ballots. With the development of electronic media capacities for interactive discussion are hugely increased. The feasibility argument now looks the most outdated of those listed and was only ever credible if one ignored the popular policy voting actually taking place in some countries.

Objections to debate at a distance shade into doubts about the general popular capacity for informed decision in points 3 and 4 in the Table. The problem here is that democracy in any of its forms justifies itself as empowering citizens, and hence bases itself on trust in their capacity to make important decisions. Doubts about this rapidly take on an anti-democratic flavor rather than just arguing against direct policy-voting (*cf* Budge, 1996, 59-83). A better argument is the one from balance (4). Citizens can take very broad decisions but are not qualified to decide technical ones. Counter arguments range from ones which ask why non expert politicians are better qualified to decide, to the observation that many important policies do have technical aspects but these can be ventilated in debate and a general decision then made on their merits.

Balance and compromise are also considerations in dealing with minorities (5). A traditional fear expressed with regard to direct voting is majority tyranny. Without safeguards or intermediaries the majority may well steamroller minorities. Of course, this fear has also been expressed with regard to democracy generally and is the reason for entrenched constitutional provisions or requirements for super-majorities on certain issues. On the face of it these could co-exist with direct

voting just as they do with Parliamentary voting. One point to note however is that voting issue by issue is less likely to lead to one clearly defined minority being consistently defeated than is package voting, where the defeated minority has to wait for the next general election to overturn the previous decision.

The effects of a tyrannical majority may be compounded by certain features of majority voting which could lead to arbitrary decisions being taken, not even desired by the real majority. The argument takes its start from the well-known voting cycle phenomenon (Condorcet, 1785; Arrow, 1951). Succinctly put, the theorem states: 'a rational individual who prefers A to B to C must prefer A to C ... it is always possible that majority rule is intransitive. In the simplest case, if voter 1 prefers A to B and B to C, voter 2 prefers C to A and A to B, and voter 3 prefers B to C and C to A, there is a majority for A over B, a majority for B over C, and a majority for C over A. Transitive individual preferences lead to an intransitive social ordering, otherwise known as a cycle' (McLean, 1991, 506).

It is easy to see how this pattern of voting might generalise over large populations, and how it could occur often enough to cast doubt on the pretension of any popular vote to reflect true majority opinion (McLean, 1989, 123). It would be equally likely, on the basis of these arguments, to reflect an arbitrary placement of topics on the agenda, or even deliberate manipulation of it.

Riker (1982) generalises this argument into a claim that we can never know whether a true majority exists. Hence liberalism – a series of checks, balances and entrenched rights – is better than majority voting. It may be observed that this argument, if correct, again tells against democracy in any of its forms. It only holds insofar as the decision space is neither unidimensional nor separable (i.e. each dimension is discussed and voted on separately). Insofar as decisions are made on Left-Right priorities or on issues voted on individually, one by one, a true majority is guaranteed.

Parties impose additional constraints on decision-space and thus enhance the probability (already high) that stable, 'real' majorities will emerge (Niemi, 1969). A telling criticism of direct democracy is therefore that it necessarily dispenses with intermediary institutions like parties, legislatures and governments. The shifting majorities that emerge under such circumstances then produce ill-considered policies which are subject to sudden reversals as the majority collapses or comes under the influence of another demagogue.

This seems a valid criticism of unmediated direct democracy which is certainly the kind of set-up which many radicals yearn for – a direct and undiluted expression of the popular will uncontaminated by wheeling and dealing and party fixes. To assess the force of the criticism we have to ask if this unmediated form is the only one direct individual/policy voting can take? In practice (Le Duc, 2003) parties often intervene in referendums or sponsor initiatives for their own ideological or office seeking purposes. In the next section we ask whether this is a valid expression of direct democracy or a perversion of it, and whether therefore the criticism of shifting majority tyranny applies to direct democracy as such or simply to particular manifestations of it.

3. VARIETIES OF DIRECT DEMOCRACY

Many of these criticisms of direct policy voting are based on the idea that it dispenses with mediating institutions such as parties and with the rules and procedures which for example guide legislative debate. This removes the constraints which produce compromise and stability and overstrains the capacity of citizens to make good decisions by in effect placing them in a vacuum. In turn this promotes instability by favoring the emergence of a new majority concerned to correct the mistakes or counter the imbalances produced by the previous one.

Certainly the idea of unmediated voting which 'lets the people speak' is one that has inspired many supporters of direct democracy who would be very unhappy

to think that intermediaries were needed. Equally clearly their ideal opens itself to many of the criticisms made above. In most countries and popular consultations however, voting is not unmediated: parties and other groups participate and courts, governments and legislatures may all decide the wording of questions, lay down rules for the conduct of the campaign and even take sides.

All this underlines the point that direct democracy is as synonymous with party and other mediation as with a lack of it. Rules and procedural constraints may be more or less present in referendums and initiatives but are never entirely absent. Insofar therefore as criticisms are focused on unmediated direct democracy they are possibly valid – but for that form only, not for direct democracy as such.

Conceptually the same point may be made by considering the base definition of direct democracy – which has surely to be the electorate voting on questions which, in traditional representative democracy, Parliament votes on. How the vote is held clearly affects the concrete form which direct democracy takes but it is clear that both mediated and unmediated forms fall under the definition. The only requirement of direct democracy is that the people vote on individual policies. How they organise themselves to vote does not affect the fact that this is direct democracy.

Looking at the extent of party mediation under various forms of direct democracy cautions us against identifying it exclusively with an unmediated form. This is shown in Figure 1. Even in ancient Athens, crude party organizations were

(FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE)

present in the form of political clubs (Bonner, 1967, 45, 61): they were the most effective way for statesmen like Pericles and Demosthenes to ensure their majority

in the Assembly and thus maintain stability and continuity in public policy – the functions of the political party in all ages.

This contrasts with the idealised Rousseauesque account (Rousseau, 1762/1947) where the popular will has to be unmediated to be pure. California is the modern example which approaches closest to unmediated direct policy voting but even there, parties and party-affiliated groups intervene. Lupia & Johnson (2001, 191-210) argue that this is necessary for 'competent voting' and point out that even in California voters are pretty adept at spotting which groups support which side and making inferences from this about the political import of proposals. Other American States see greater party intervention on important proposals. (Magleby, 1994, 88 & 94), a tendency which becomes the norm in countries like Italy and Switzerland.

All this is to make the obvious point that procedural rules are necessary for votes, even popular votes, to be held. We would not expect a representative democracy to function without a constitution (written or unwritten), presiding officers, rules of procedure and debate. No more should we expect a direct democracy to do so. Just as representative democracies may have more or less regulation of these matters so may direct democracies. To California we can contrast Quebec with a whole branch of law devoted to the few referendums that have been held.

(Table 2 about here)

Most criticisms in Table 1 apply particularly or exclusively to unmediated and relatively unregulated forms of popular policy voting. As such they may have a high degree of validity. However, the solution under direct democracy as under representative democracy is not to abandon it but to strengthen procedures in

order to deal with these dangers, and to encourage mediation rather than discourage it. This may put off many advocates of participatory or discursive democracy who wish to let the people speak unmediated. But if direct democracy consists in deciding individual policy through popular votes, mediation is quite consistent with it (Budge, 2000).

4. DOES DIRECT DEMOCRACY WEAKEN POLITICAL PARTIES?

In popular votes in the contemporary world many bodies play an important mediating role: courts, governments and legislatures may all decide on the exact question to be put to voters, when the vote will be held, what the consequences will be – as well even as advocating what option to vote for. As we have argued above this does not disqualify such voting as expressions of direct democracy. Mediated forms are as valid within this context as unmediated – though of course any form of direct policy vote opens up more opportunities to normally silent or excluded groups than does representative democracy per se.

Of the groups intervening in votes by far the most important are political parties, for the reasons already given. They formulate the questions to be put, inform electors what is at stake and put the issue in a broader context. They generally finance and organise the campaign.

We have already seen however (Table 1 Point 7) that one objection to direct democracy is that it may itself undermine and subvert political parties, by corroding their organisational support, electoral loyalty, control of government, internal discipline and ideological coherence. Clearly if that did happen it would mean that direct democracy necessarily weakens mediation and thus give renewed force to the criticisms summarised in Table 1

Table 2 summarises some of the arguments for the weakening effect of direct democracy on parties, and some of the answers or rebuttals that can be made.

(TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE)

Many of these worries are driven by American scholars' concern about what was happening to the American Democrats (and to a lesser extent the Republicans) in the latter third of the twentieth century. Point 4 in particular reflects reactions to the way candidates like Carter and Kerry fought their way through primary elections with their own personal organisation and finances, using the formal party apparatus only as an adjunct in the later campaign. The growing impact of third party candidates like Wallace, Perot and Nader also seemed to testify to the eclipse of traditional parties. California with its plethora of largely unmediated policy votes and weak parties was at the forefront of all these developments. Accordingly the weakening of parties tended to be associated in scholars' minds with the growth of initiatives and primaries which took decisions out of the traditional smoke-filled rooms and into the hands of untutored electors. In the light of these trends, American scholars saw popular voting weakening parties elsewhere (Kobach, 1994, 132), ignoring their 150 year survival or even flourishing co-existence with referendums and initiatives (Switzerland) or long history of institutionalised factionalism before popular policy voting (Italy).

The emphasis of Point 3 on legislative compromise also reflects an idealised picture of US politics before they became ideological. Where is the room for compromise in the confrontational clashes of Government and Opposition under the 'elective dictatorship' of the Westminster model? The immobilisme of the French and Italian legislatures was only made tolerable by social and constitutional reforms passed in referendums.

As for control of the political agenda passing out of the hands of political parties, this point simply ignores the ability of parties to pursue their objectives by other than Parliamentary means when they are blocked at that level. The efforts of

Australian parties to promote constitutional reforms in their own interest (Mendelsohn & Parkin, 2001, 114-9) has mostly been blocked by lack of support but they keep on trying. In Italy the new and excluded parties (Radicals, Greens and Communists) saw opportunities to promote popular initiatives by collecting signatures and organising a nation-wide vote on policy. This unblocked the Parliamentary process and thus kept the existing system in being until the 1990s. It also strengthened the position of these parties both in organisational and popular terms.

This use of referendums and initiatives by new and opposition parties to publicise themselves and sometimes to threaten governments was of course historically used in Switzerland, first by the Catholic party at the end of the 19th century and then by the Socialists in the interwar period to force themselves into the governing coalition (Linder, 1994, 19-21, 29-31). From the 'seventies onwards the Republicans have used this technique to transform themselves from the subordinate to the dominant party in Southern and Western States, and are now starting to do the same in California. One should avoid equating the decline of previously dominant parties like the Democrats as evidence for a weakening of parties as such. All these cases demonstrate that as one party goes down the others go up. It could even be argued that direct democracy strengthens 'the forces restoring party competition' (Stokes & Iverson, 1962).

In a careful comparative analysis based both on case studies and statistical evidence Mendelson & Parkin (eds, 2001, 7-8 and *passim*) conclude there is simply no evidence for direct democracy weakening parties. On the contrary, as argued above, it adds to their repertoire – while of course allowing more interventions by other groups and by electors themselves.

5. REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY AND THE MEDIAN MANDATE

With the presence of parties and other mediating institutions such as courts and governments, direct democracy as it has shaped itself in practice in the modern world does not seem so enormously removed from representative democracy. This is particularly true as modern representative democracy under the influence of parties has evolved into a policy-voting form, where parties compete on the basis of their published programmes (platforms or manifestos). From this process the party with majority endorsement emerges with a 'mandate' to effect its popularly chosen programme in government, thus guaranteeing the 'necessary connection' between preferences and policy which theorists have stressed as the essential feature of true democracy.

The presence of a 'Government Mandate' in this form has become a – if not the – major justification of modern democracy. Critics (Powell, 2000; McDonald, Mendès & Budge, 2004; McDonald & Budge, 2005) have pointed out however that spontaneous electoral majorities for one party rarely emerge – in only 12 per cent of cases even in non PR systems. Elections thus fail to work as a government mandate would prescribe. Fortunately, comparative evidence suggests that a generalised 'median mandate' does work.

The 'median mandate' is a generalisation of the government mandate – focused however on the relationship between the median voter and the median party in Parliament. The median position is important because its policy preference dominates, as can be seen from the example in Figure 1. The median voter is crucial for forming a

(FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE)

majority: hence the majority preference must be close to the median to secure its note. This implies at the electoral level that what the majority would want can

always be inferred from the position of the median voter or citizen. It also implies that the median party in Parliament will dominate voting there. A summary of the conditions for a median mandate to operate is given in Table 3.

(TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE)

To enforce the 'necessary connection' between majority opinion and (intentions for) public policy, election systems must therefore ensure that the dominating median party in Parliament is the one the median voter supported. Proportional representation does this pretty well for individual elections. Plurality constituency-based systems create a strong party alternation in government which ends up averaging out public policy close to the long term preference of the median voter (McDonald & Budge, 2005, Chap. 7).

There is strong evidence that the public space within which general election debates are carried out is a Left-Right, unidimensional one (for electors see Miller, Pierce, et al (1999): for parties see Budge, Klingemann, et al (2001)). Even where the policy space is multidimensional, so that a median cannot be entirely guaranteed (McKelvey, 1979) it generally occurs owing to the structure imposed by parties (Niemi, 1979) and to correlations between the constituent dimensions (Adams and Adams, 2000).

All this reinforces the point that 'representative democracy' in its modern form adds up to direct policy voting – but in contrast to 'direct democracy', as classically and currently conceived, this is voting on a package of policies rather than on each individual policy within the package. The difference this could make is shown in Table 4. Voting on policies individually, one by one, cannot be absolutely guaranteed to produce the same outcome as voting on a policy package as a whole – although of course it generally may.

6. COMBINING DIRECT AND REPRESENTATIVE (PROGRAMMATIC) DEMOCRACY: AN EMERGING SYNTHESIS?

In the modern world, direct and representative democracy have come together, through the pervasiveness of policy voting and the party role in organising it. Of the two, indeed representative democracy has come the longer way, no longer based on individual representation but rather on programmatic voting with the successful party as guarantor of the programme. Direct democracy has continued to differentiate itself as direct voting on individual policies, most often policies not central to ongoing party politics or exceptional decisions which transcend normal party divisions.

We can see this better by examining actual practice in contemporary democracies. Popular policy votes tend to be held disproportionately in five areas: changes in the constitution: territorial questions covering secessions or extensions of the national territory, devolution and autonomy: foreign policy: moral matters such as divorce, abortion and homosexuality: and ecology and environment (including local campaigns for protection of particular features, or in opposition to the siting of a power plant). In Swiss Cantons and American States, fiscal matters are increasingly voted on, usually involving tax limitation and restrictions on the size of government. (For up to date surveys of content-matter see Le Duc, 2003).

It can be seen from this that policy-voting tends to take place either on issues of a certain level of generality – constitutions or foreign policy measures like trade liberalisation that will have a long-term effect – or in areas which fit uneasily into the Left-Right division of party politics and which might indeed provoke internal splits, like moral and ecological matters. The closest policy votes come to influencing the current political agenda is on fiscal matters. Even tax limitation has a long term rather than an immediate effect however. Almost never is a vote held to ‘prioritise

unemployment now', 'stop inflation', 'end the War', 'reduce prison population' and so on.

Several factors contribute to this pattern of policy consultation. First and perhaps most importantly governments do not want to put their central policies to referendum. So where they have control voting will not cover issues central to Left-Right conflicts – only to off-issues which might split the party. New and opposition parties have generally also mobilised to put such issues on the agenda and not to refight continuing party battles.

A party based explanation is only one part of the answer however since the same pattern occurs also in fairly unregulated popular initiatives where parties have less control. It is probable that electors themselves and even self-interested groups see no point in taking up matters that have already been part of the general election debate, putting into office parties which are pursuing them as part of a mandate. As we have stressed, so-called representative elections are heavily focused around medium term policy plans, so it is natural that parties should be left to get on with them at least in their first years in office (and it often takes time to organise a referendum or initiative).

In this way a certain division of labour seems to be emerging spontaneously between general, programmatic, elections and direct policy voting on individual issues. Where issues are linked together and form an integral part of the activity of governments, usually within the traditional Left-Right framework, the parties in power are left to get on with them. Where individual issues have long term implications and do not fit so easily into a unifying framework they tend disproportionately to be the subject of special popular votes. The overall mix does not seem a bad way of trying to translate popular preferences into public policy and in fact approaches that advocated by Budge (1996, 183-6) as a way in which contemporary democracies could evolve into (mediated) direct ones.

7. THE ESSENTIAL COMPATIBILITY OF THESE TWO FORMS OF PARTY DEMOCRACY

Individual issue voting is on the increase. In the latest survey Le Duc (2003, 21-22, 152) estimates that its use increased from around 250 from 1961-80 to nearly 350 from 1981-2000 over the countries of the world excluding Switzerland. In both the American States and Switzerland policy votes doubled in the last 20 years compared to the preceding period. In many jurisdictions such as the German Länder, the UK and New Zealand individual policy voting has now been introduced for the first time. This makes it important to see how the new developments fit into or threaten traditional democratic practice of the last 100 years or so. There is probably little to surprise us in this trend. In a world where the majority of citizens are better-educated, better off and increasingly self confident, it is natural that they should take the promise of democracy seriously and seek to get their preferences directly enacted into public policy. The ability of democracy to make a 'necessary connection' between the two through elections is as we have seen its core characteristic. This is what gives direct democracy its driving force and wide appeal in the modern world: there is no better way of enforcing the link than by voting directly on each policy.

Of course, the groups pressing for direct voting often have other motivations too. They feel their causes – whether to reduce taxes or protect the environment – are so obviously correct that they will have majority support if they can only get them on the ballot and sweep self-serving parties away. So far analysts have failed to find any clear evidence that direct policy voting favors particular outcomes, either in terms of direct votes or indirect influence on legislatures from the threat of an initiative. There is some evidence however that its presence does bring policy closer to median (majority) voter preferences – which vary of course over time and between jurisdictions (Gerber & Hug, 2001, 106).

As critics have pointed out (*cf* Table 1), sweeping away parties and other mediating institutions brings many undesirable consequences which may lead in the end to popular majorities voting against their own preferences and interests. This may result from lack of the essential if minimal information about wider implications which party endorsements provide, or from shifting majorities voting against taxes in one consultation and for public services in another.

Despite the aspirations of many of its advocates however direct democracy does not generally take on an anti-party or non-partisan form. It can be argued that even in the US States established parties fought back successfully against policy proposals which threatened their central interests, as with tax cuts (Cronin, 1989, 205-6). The minority Republicans also built up to their present dominance by exploiting popular initiatives, among other tactics. Elsewhere established parties dominate referendums and opposition and emergent parties exploit policy votes to embarrass the government and force their own recognition. Of course, the best way to fight parties is to form an anti-party party, which many proponents of extended participation and popular voting do (e.g. the German Greens and Danish Progress Party).

In terms of actual practice therefore direct democracy tends towards either strongly mediated or moderately mediated rather than unmediated forms. This is hardly surprising as it tends to take place in party-run representative democracies with a plethora of institutions – Governments, Parliaments, bureaucracy and courts – overseeing its processes and codifying them along the lines of fair play embodied in general elections. The American experience should not be allowed to dominate discussion, especially since weak regulation of representative as well as direct elections is the norm there.

Convergence between specific policy consultations and general election practice should not be surprising since they are both about policy. An essential

starting point for informed debate should be that so-called representative democracy is actually about putting policy packages to electors and following through on them in government. By making the party supported by the median voter the median party in Parliament, its program is empowered even under coalition governments.

Our choice between direct democracy and representative democracy should not therefore continue to base itself on outdated contrasts between popular policy decision and representative deliberation. Rather it should characterise itself as being between individual policy voting and package policy voting. Put this way it seems much less apocalyptic than it has been portrayed. The two procedures cannot be 100 per cent guaranteed against producing different outcomes but this is far from saying that they will generally do so.

In any case decisions on the issues involved are probably best arrived at using the different procedures. Where issues are linked to each other, generally through forming part of Left-Right divisions, decisions on one may well have consequences for the others and so are best voted on as a package to be effected over 4-5 years. The outcome from overall programme voting should be respected here. Where issues are more discrete and have less mutual interactive effects they are probably best voted on separately, especially when they do not 'fit' in Left-Right terms and get ignored or totally excluded in general election debate. In these areas decisions from individual policy votes should dominate, thus resolving the paradox presented in Table 4 of different decisions emerging from different procedures.

Happily this division of labour seems to be evolving in actual democratic practice. In this sense the modern extension of individual policy voting enhances and extends the 'necessary democratic connection' between popular preferences and public policy, much rather than threatening and undermining it.

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TABLE 1

CRITICISMS OF DIRECT DEMOCRACY WITH COUNTER-ARGUMENTS TO THEM

	CRITICISMS	RESPONSE
1.	General Elections already let citizens choose between alternative governments and programs	Many issues are not discussed at General Elections so if the people are to decide they need to vote on them directly
2.	It is impossible to have direct debate and voting in modern democracies	Even postal ballots and the print media let alone two-way communication devices allow interactive debate and voting among physically separated citizens
3.	Ordinary citizens do not have the education, interest, time, expertise and other qualities required to make good political decisions	Politicians do not necessarily show expertise and interest. Participation expands citizen capacities. Citizens currently spend a lot of time informing themselves about politics through TV and radio
4.	Good decisions are most likely to be produced where popular participation is balanced by expert judgment. This is representative democracy where citizens can	Expertise is important but not infallible. In any case it can inform popular decisions. Modern representative (party) democracies are heavily imbalanced against popular participation.

	indicate the general direction policy should take but leave it to be carried out by professionals	
5.	Those who vote against a particular decision do not give their consent to it, particularly if the same people are always in the minority.	The problem is general and not confined to direct democracy. Voting on issues one by one gives minorities more voice.
6.	No procedure for democratic collective decision-making can be guaranteed not to produce arbitrary outcomes.	Such problems are generic to democratic voting procedures. Voting on dichotomous questions one by one (the usual procedure in popular policy consultations) does however eliminate cyclical voting and guarantees a median.
7.	Without intermediary institutions (parties, legislatures, governments) no coherent, stable or informed policies will be made. Direct democracy undermines intermediary institutions including parties.	Direct democracy does not <u>have</u> to be unmediated. Parties and governments could play the same role as in representative (party) democracies today.

TABLE 2

DOES DIRECT DEMOCRACY WEAKEN POLITICAL PARTIES? ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST

	FOR	AGAINST
1.	Control of the political agenda is transferred from political parties to irresponsible interest groups.	Parties often use referendums and initiatives for their own purposes e.g. to avoid internal splits or promote themselves
2.	Voting on issues one by one undermines the consistency of party programs	Party programs are not that consistent – defeat on one issue will not radically alter government plans.
3.	Popular policy debates simplify issues and leave little room for deliberation and party-brokered compromises	In the modern world legislatures cannot be insulated from media coverage and general criticism and debate, so there is little space for closed door negotiation and debate
4.	Party discipline breaks down as party members take different sides in a referendum or debate. Parties may get 'hollowed out' as leaders build personal organisations outside the main party machine.	Relaxation of party discipline on a single issue often avoids damaging disputes and splits. Parties are often more united particularly on initiatives than they are on legislative votes (e.g. Italy). In any case some parties are factionalised but this would happen without direct voting (Italy) and does happen where it is absent (Japan, India).

TABLE 3: CONDITIONS FOR A MEDIAN MANDATE TO EMERGE

1. **Party distinctiveness** – at least two parties have policy positions that differ from one another.
2. **Voter information** – voters recognise the policy profiles of the parties.
3. **Voter motivation** – voters cast their ballots on the basis of the party policy position they prefer to control policy making.
4. **Shared party-voter alignment** – voters and parties arrange their public policy preferences within broadly the same policy space, probably a left-right dimension.
5. **Electoral system translation** – the election outcome makes the party supported by the median voter the party with which the median parliamentarian affiliates.
6. **Party policy commitment** – parties are motivated by a desire to see their own policy position control policy making.
7. **Power of the median** – the occupant of the median position is crucial to the creation of a majority in both the electorate and parliament.
 - (a) Majority-endorsed preferences tend towards the median voter position, so this forms the best indicator of popular policy preferences in general.
 - (b) Public policy tends towards the policy of the parliamentary median under legislative majority voting procedures.

TABLE 4

Voting on a program as opposed to single issues: Party B wins on its overall program even though a majority opposes its position on each specific issue

<i>Voter</i>	<i>Issues</i>		
	<i>X</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>z</i>
1	a	b	b
2	b	a	b
3	b	b	a
4	a	a	a
5	a	a	a

a and b are different alternatives on each policy, which may be positions endorsed by political parties A and B.

FIGURE 1

DIFFERENT KINDS OF DIRECT DEMOCRACY

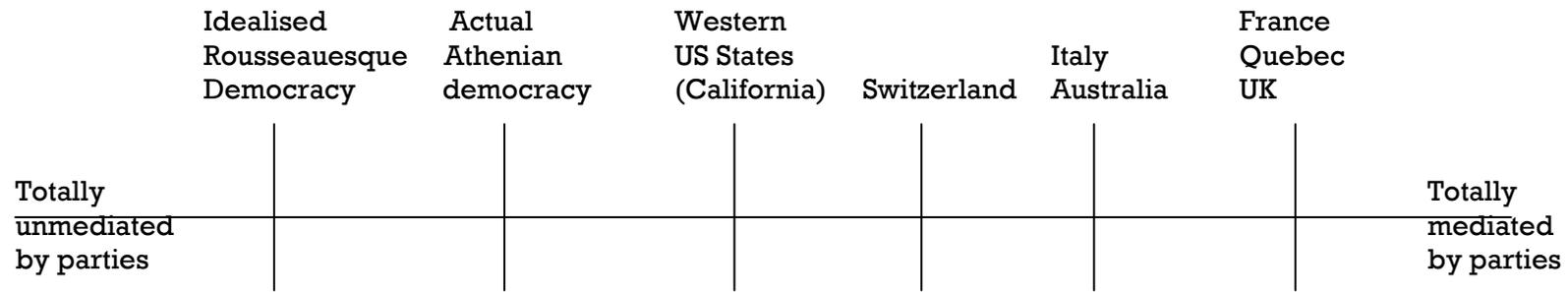


FIGURE 2

**CONTROLLING POSITION OF THE MEDIAN (VOTER OR PARTY C) IN A
ONE-DIMENSIONAL POLICY SPACE**

