

Preface

P.1 War and Peace

‘The confidence of the House’ is the basis of Westminster democracy. Those who rule must first gain the support of a majority of the elected members. So it’s all yes-or-no, for-or-against, government versus opposition. Thus, the House divides into two, the bigger ‘half’ with all the power, the smaller with none. Thus, for the next few years, every political controversy is reduced to a dichotomy. Thus, decisions are taken by (simple or weighted) majority vote (the outcomes of most of which, therefore, are utterly predictable). And thus (nearly) all politics is adversarial. It need not be so.

The consequences are several. In Israel and Ukraine, to name but two conflict zones, a belief in the notion that democracy is based on rule by a majority—which often becomes *the* majority—was and still is part of the problem. Secondly, the fact that democracy has come to be so confrontational, not least in these two countries, has meant that the search for a solution requires something which is considered to be beyond the democratic norm: a form of power-sharing.

Or take Syria and Iraq. In 2002, two facts were of huge significance: (1) in both the USA and UK, the democratic process gave so much power to just one individual in each, George W. Bush and Tony Blair; (2) in the UN Security Council, decisions were (and still are) taken by (weighted) majority vote. Together, they were part of the cause of the war in Iraq and the subsequent rise of ISIS both there and in Syria.

Humankind will not survive if violence on such a scale cannot be overcome and if, in a more peaceful atmosphere, a collective decision on global warming proves to be elusive. As in conflicts, so too in international politics, a consensus is needed. When aiming to limit the world’s temperature rise to two degrees, for example, every country must be involved, not just the rich, not just the underdeveloped, not just the low-lying nations, but all of them. The first item on the agenda, therefore, is to agree on how decisions should be made and by whom. Both in choosing the

decision-makers, and then in their decision-making, the processes must be win–win.

Sadly, at the moment, a willingness to take collective decisions is hindered by the lack of a proper methodology, and institutions like the World Trade Organisation and various UN conferences are still working in a majoritarian milieu. So too are numerous national jurisdictions. Furthermore, as implied above, many ethno-religious conflicts are at least exacerbated if not indeed caused by the use of inappropriate voting procedures and unfair systems of democratic governance.

Meanwhile, in so-called stable democracies, an adherence to this notion that everything must be subject to the ‘confidence of the House’ has created some extraordinary anomalies, many of which only increase the sense of frustration and disillusionment that is felt so widely these days with democracy in general.

P.2 Changing the World

A lust for power has always dominated world history, and the road to democracy has often involved huge opposition from vested interests, not least the monarchs of old. Today, hopefully, democracy is here to stay. But so too, alas, is that lust.

Within any democratic structure, therefore, in any elected chamber, there will always be those who try to acquire more influence and power, albeit via tactics a little less bloody than those of former years. The real democrats, however, are those who wish to implement not so much their own policies, more ‘the will of the people’ whom admittedly they, the politicians, may have influenced. The latter should aspire to be the people’s servants, not promoting their own ideas and/or those of their party, but offering themselves as loyal representatives—loyal, that is, not so much to their party but to their constituents. Current democratic structures are somewhat at odds with this idea. Both in referendums and in elections, individual members of the public often tend to vote, not so much for that which they think is good for society as a whole, more for that from which they and their families might benefit (that or against the perceived opposite).

The democratic process should be one in which all come together to make a collective decision; in other words, the process, and any voting procedure used in that process, should be inclusive. In practice, the opposite is the case, and all too often, resort is made to exclusive voting procedures. In decision-making, it is the (simple or weighted) majority vote; 50 % plus one of the vote means 100 % of the decision. In like manner, many electoral systems relate to either total victory or total defeat, and these include some proportional systems in which success depends upon the support of not just a majority (or the largest minority) of the voters, but of only a quota of voters.

P.3 Towards a More Inclusive Democracy

Unfortunately, one of the worst democratic structures is the most ubiquitous: majority rule based on majority voting. It must be emphasised, furthermore, that these two practices are often the catalysts of division and bitterness, if not indeed violence and war. To survive, therefore, our human species must progress to the stage in which more inclusive voting procedures become the norm, a stage in which such words as ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ are no longer so prominent in the political lexicon.

The motivating thesis behind this book, then, is the following: the world will be more peaceful if and when countries reform their democratic structures from the present adversarial format to one which is more consensual. And the specific purpose of this text is to describe a methodology by which, in councils and parliaments everywhere, be they national or international, executive power may be shared, democratically, by persons of more than one party or country.

The text advocates win–win voting procedures for the two functions mentioned: decision-making and choosing the decision-makers, and there is a brief mention of a similar methodology for use as an electoral system. Its main focus is on a methodology to ensure that those in power, from the executive committee of the local community group, via the cabinets of elected parliaments, to the decision-makers in the international forum, then share that power.

The human race will more likely survive if organisations throughout civic society—and not only councils and parliaments in the political sphere—adopt these procedures. Preferential voting is more inclusive, more accurate in identifying the collective opinions of the given electorate, and therefore more democratic. In addition, the procedures outlined in the pages which follow are not only totally ethno-colour blind and ideally suited to conflict resolution, they are also utterly compatible to the modern computer age.

P.4 Nomenclature

When analysing voting procedures, options are lettered alphabetically, **A**, **B**, **C** . . . etc., in bold, italicised capitals. Political parties are also lettered, **I**, **J**, **K** . . ., in bold capitals, and all party members are given first names starting with their party’s letter: Ivan, for example is in Party **I**; John and Joan are members of the **J** Party, while Kate and Ken are both in Party **K**. In situations where party membership is not important, individuals, partisan or non-partisan, may be lettered *i*, *j*, *k* . . . etc., and will usually be referred to as if they are of an alternate gender.

Other anonymous individuals—chairpersons, spokespersons, protagonists, voters, etc.—will also be considered in this way; thus, the text might refer to a male in one paragraph and to a female in the next; rarely will use be made of such constructions as ‘he/she’.

Table P.1 The points: sums, scores, and totals

The candidates:	The Points			Scores:
	Chair	Secretary	Treasurer	
Ian	-	sum	-	score
Kate	-	sum	-	score
Jim	-	-	sum	score
Karen	sum	-	sum	score
Irene	-	sum	sum	score
Joan	sum	-	-	score
Scores:	score	score	score	total

Systems of governance vary enormously, but there is often a good deal of overlap. A no-party or one-party state, as was the case in Uganda, for example, after years of violence came to an end in 1986, could be compared to a national unity structure. Suffice to say that, in these pages, the term ‘power-sharing’ refers to an all-party or all-inclusive coalition.

When analysing the matrix vote, the word ‘sum’ refers to the number of points any one candidate has received in the body of the matrix, i.e. the number of points she has received for one particular portfolio; a ‘score’ concerns all of the points both she and other candidates received, or all the points cast for one particular portfolio; and a ‘total’ is an addition of several scores.

Accordingly, a matrix vote results table indicating the points received might look as shown in Table P.1, with lots of sums in the main body of the matrix, with scores (the addition of those sums), in the final column and the bottom row, and with one total (the vertical or horizontal addition of these scores), in the bottom right-hand corner.

In the text itself, any ordinals which refer to preferences are written as 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc.; in any other context, they are spelt out, first, second, and third.

Most books spell out any numbers under 10, and this text does the same—one, two, three, etc.—unless the numbers concerned refer to voters, votes, and/or parliamentary seats, in which case they are often written numerically—1, 2, 3. . .

The text is also a little unusual in that, not only in the rest of this Preface but also in Chap. 1, use is made of the first person—I was, after all, very involved in the history of the matrix vote—whereas elsewhere, references to myself are in the third person.

P.5 Acknowledgements

All due recognition must be given, first of all, to Jean-Charles de Borda who (amongst at least six other individuals—one Spanish perhaps, one German definitely, one British, one Irish, a Dane, and a Brazilian)—invented the Borda Count, BC; and secondly to the late Professor Sir Michael Dummett, who (uniquely) devised the quota Borda system, QBS; he also gave me much personal encouragement, not least just weeks before he died.

So now to others who have also given me incredible support. Firstly, and despite the fact that he never quite managed to get his head round what he thought were the intricacies of the matrix vote, my thanks go to Dr. John Robb. As I relate in Sect. 1.1.1, the voting procedure was first put under public scrutiny at a cross-community conference in 1986. The success of that gathering and the high degree of participation therein from all sections of society in Northern Ireland, NI, was largely due to John's good contacts; he was, and still is, highly respected and much loved. Credit should also be given to others in the New Ireland Group, NIG, for their work was invaluable, not least that of its tireless secretary, Wes Holmes.

Next come colleagues in the Green Party, GP, most especially the far from numerate but highly literate Phil Kearney, whom I first met at the founding convention of the Irish GP in 1982. His ideas have often been the source of those which subsequently have appeared to be mine, not least his proposal to set up the de Borda Institute. In addition, his suggestions on campaigning have invariably been sound—as, for example, the 2009 Dublin experiment, which was entirely his initiative (Sect. 1.1.1.2). Moreover, he has been a constructive presence at numerous events over the years and throughout these islands. Other encouragement has come from a long-serving patron to the de Borda institute, Professor Emerita Elizabeth Meehan. She chaired both the 1998 Belfast seminar on the matrix vote and the Dublin seminar and has also spoken at many other de Borda functions. My thanks too to another long-time patron, Professor Emeritus John Baker, who designed the computer software for that 2009 Dublin seminar.

My thanks also go to the many acquaintances, friends, and colleagues, especially those in the NIG, the GP, and the de Borda Institute, as well as to several persons now unknown, who have participated in one or more of the matrix vote experiments, both here in Ireland and abroad, and who, I think, not only learnt from the experiences but also enjoyed them. Pretending to be competing power-hungry politicians is such good fun!

Finally, I would like to give my appreciation to those who have helped in the preparation of this book: to Johannes Glaeser of Springer, who devised the title; to Anthony Baudouin and Dr. Helen Dixon of Queen's University, who produced the two fine charts in Chaps. 3 and 4; to John Baker, and then Alan Quilley and Rob Fairmichael, who, respectively, offered many helpful suggestions on some or most of the text; and to colleagues like Professor Hannu Nurmi in Finland, Marcin Gerwin in Poland, and countless individuals in so many embassies, who have provided me with details about their various countries.

P.6 A Limitation

To change the human world, one first has to understand it, and no one individual can do that comprehensively. The examples I use in the text are therefore largely confined to those places where I have lived and worked.

In the 1960s, I visited many countries in the Far East, albeit, on most occasions, very briefly; I was a sailor, a submariner, based in Singapore. In my next job in Kenya, I taught maths and physics for three years in the 1970s, before travelling extensively in Central Africa. Next I went to India, then to come home overland via Pakistan and Afghanistan, to settle in NI in 1975; and here I am still based. Starting in 1984, I have also seen many countries of the (former) Soviet Union where I worked as a translator towards the end of that decade. I came home via the Balkans in 1990 but returned to Yugoslavia as a freelance war correspondent during the Bosnian conflict. Since then, throughout Central and Eastern Europe, I have worked as an election observer for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE, in more than a score of elections in nine different countries. I have also served as an EU cease-fire monitor for South Ossetia in Georgia. In addition, as director of the de Borda Institute, I have lectured in many countries abroad, throughout Europe and North America, and most recently in China.

This book, therefore, contains very few examples from Latin America and only a few mentions of Asian countries. Not only in this respect, however, does this book have its shortcomings. The subject is just too huge to cover in one small volume. For this and any other failings, the fault is mine alone.

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