

MAJORITY RULE

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1. Why do we need 'Majority Rule'?

a. technical terms

Reaching a one hundred percent consensus on any subject is impossible. People have different interests at heart, and they all have the right to voice out their opinions. But this means that nothing will ever reach a decision and so we have to set up a standard for decision making to become more practical. If one hundred percent is impossible and impractical, what number of percentage is adequate? Eighty percent for example, would not be appropriate, because it means that only twenty percent is needed to override the wishes of the eighty percent, the majority. The agreed percentage is 51%, half of the whole plus one.

b. political perspectives

A government is constantly facing conflicts and it needs to make choices efficiently. The government does not have the time nor the energy to try and gain everyone's consensus. So the government gives equal weight to the opinion of each equal citizen and takes actions for the wish of the more people, according to majority rule.

2. Is Majority Rule evidence for democracy? How about communist or totalitarian society?

Democracy means 'rule by the people'. The majority rule may not satisfy this term, because majority rule only allows the will of the majority of the more active citizens to be exercised. We are conveniently assuming the majority opinion as the people's wish for the sake of practicality. So majority rule may be the character of today's version of democracy, but it violates the essence of true and theoretic democracy.

Historically majority rule has been the means of justifying power of a dictator in autocratic state. Such examples are withdrawing decision in The League of Nations, union between Austria and Hungary, and the Yusin government.

3. How can we enforce the majority's opinion to the minority now that we are all equal and free in democratic society?

As Aristotle said, wisdom of many is likely to be better than that of the minority of one person. But one has to admit that majority rule is not perfect, but because every man is equal majority rule is certainly a better form of decision making than minority rule, or one-man rule.

Majority rule can be justified on the grounds that fundamental values in society are shared. The fundamental values refer to concepts such as right and freedom. So because everyone accepts these values, the minority recognizes the need to follow the majority. It is important to enforce the important values by law, so that the minority can be protected. If not so, the possibility of majority tyranny exists.

4. Limitation

a. tyranny of the majority

The theory of democracy in procedure is no longer democratic, for the fifty-one percent is forcing the remaining forty-nine percent

b. opinion collecting-procedure

People have diverse interest and their wishes vary. Bring these opinions together to form few collective choices has limitations. We cannot be sure that these choices truly represent the people. Naturally, the result cannot be the true preference of the society.

c. majority may not always be right

Despite what Aristotle said, majority does not necessarily represent proper values or truths. Sometimes, it is a few wise men who lead the society in the right direction.

d. does not favor negotiation or compromise

Majority rule provides only limited incentives for compromise. Since fifty-one percent is the necessary amount, once this figure is reached, no further efforts are made to persuade the remaining population. True democracy should always try and have discussions and negotiations through which as many people as possible can reach an agreement.

5. Conclusion

With all these flaws, why don't we look for a better way of decision making than the current majority rule? Let's look at two alternatives.

Super majority rule : Requires a percentage that is higher than 51%.

Rank-order : Ranking various options in order of preference.

Super majority is dangerous. If a higher percentage is required, this means that the

present power holding side will be at advantage. In this system minority interest can be easily ignored. Also, a little portion has the power to block the majority from taking action. Rank-order has the possibility of irrelevant options effecting, or even determining the result.

So majority rule seems to be the best method, due to the lack of a better system. Since we know of the weaknesses it carries, we can take caution and be aware of its preconditions to ensure proper use of majority rule. First, we have to remember that it is not applicable to scientific facts or absolute, fundamental values. In other words, the subject's nature should be considered before application. Second, equal weight should be given to the opinion of each member. Last and most importantly, the limitation of not having enough negotiation should be over come. We have to remember why majority exists. It is to strengthen democracy and to ensure people's interest. We must go through the stages of discussion, persuasion, compromise and negotiation. Opinions are changeable, and everyone should be entitled to a chance to speak out and persuade others. In this process, minority can be respected and better options with less conflict will be developed.

6. Bonus

- *Majority rule does not work if the fundamental values of the members are different.
- *Ballot than bullet. Marriage of mind. These are concepts to keep ion mind incase of conflict. We have two choices in a conflict; marry or kill. If possible, 'marry' is the more beneficial choice.
- *In case of a decision that involves top-secret information, open discussion is impossible.
- *Well-organized minority rules over the foolish majority, because it can make decisions and act quickly.
- *Communism opens only certain information. This makes the people think in the same way, and therefore the majority reaches a conclusion