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Politics without Parties

Knowledge & preferences

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Introduction

The contents of this document were originally written in 2005-2006 and made up Chapter 24 of the book *"The Briton's Quest for Freedom ... Our unfinished journey..."* published by HPC in 2007. It is accompanied by another document entitled, *"A proposition on how to perfect our democracy"* which sets out the environment within which the Minority Principle can be applied.

The sections of the book covered by these documents follow a review of the problems arising with the application of the majority principle. This ends up with a small powerful faction with an inexpressive voting power, in terms of their number, capturing the control of political party agendas. In other words, the so-called majority principle results in power ending up in the hands of a minority.

In this same review *The Briton's Quest for Freedom* identifies some 49 procedures commonly supported by political parties which constrain the freedom of expression of the majority.

The notion of democracy based on the will of the majority is an unrealistic notion since in reality each constituent is a member of a minority in terms of shared interests related to upbringing, education, interests, income status, religion, gender, ethnicity, ambition and outlook. However, the party-political system resorts to dog whistle tactics to gather marginal votes as a way to accumulate enough to gain parliamentary majorities. In governance the election promises are seldom delivered with voting being cynically used to legitimize the government party. Once in government, the election promises are often not delivered and frequently other decisions are taken in terms of policy which the electorate is never provided with the opportunity to pass an opinion.

The minority principle is designed to raise the level of perception and understanding of constituent wishes by requiring administrations central or devolved:

- Making people aware of impending decision that can affect them
- Providing people with the opportunity to express opinions of all decisions that can affect them and include in some cases power of veto
- Introducing cautionary diligence on the part of administrations to apply the minority principles in decisions

For most people accustomed to the first-past-the post electoral system there is a considerable level of cynicism associated with more participatory decision making which the minority principle encouraged. The notion is that to take decisions there is a need to effectively marginalize a considerable proportion of the electorate. However, another document *"Knowledge and preferences"*, a reprint of Chapter 23 of *The Briton's Quest for Freedom*, provides an explanation as to how close to unanimous decisions can be reached even in cases which start out with constituents holding diverse opinions.

There has been, for some time, a constitutional issue related to the role of political parties in not permitting a truly participatory democracy in terms of the identification of gaps and needs, identifying economic policy options and then analyzing these so as to select the most appropriate in terms of the majority and on the basis of public choice.

The minority principle is a constitutional condition which can assist the country move towards a set of administrative procedures that can facilitate effective public choice based on participatory identification and formulation of policies.

Given that our current regime of the majority principle some might find what follows is fanciful but the final parts which write out the specific operational principles as they might appear in a constitution, in order to make the intent clear. Whether or not these are practical depends upon the administrative level at which these are applied as explained in the document, "*A proposition on how to perfect our democracy*"

Knowledge & Real Preferences

The majority principle & preferences

In political decision-making, the majority principle, under the management of political parties, causes elections to result in the preference of the larger proportion of voters, who in fact voted, to prevail over the preference of the remaining smaller proportion. As described earlier in this book this does not work very well and it even fails to detect what the real preferences of the electorate are. However, the irrationality of the majority principle can be explained without having to review the state of affairs of British politics. If, for example, we consider two people with different preferences there is no justification for favouring one person's preference over the other, especially if implementing either would not affect the other. Each individual is entirely justified in expecting to remain free from any imposition of the other's preference.

If this pair is increased to a hundred people and ninety-nine have a preference for the action of one of the original pair, the majority principle would result in the preference of the remaining individual being completely discounted. Nothing has happened to the fundamental validity of that single person's preference nor, indeed, has anything happened to alter the expectation of that individual to be able to uphold that personal preference. There is no intrinsic logic to discourage this individual to drop the preference held unless what they desire might harm others.

It is not unusual for majority decisions to be taken and, through law, imposed on and to harm people by preventing them from following their own preferences. In the rough and tumble of modern politics, the majority principle ends up imposing decisions on people who have other fully justifiable and sometimes more rational preferences and expectations. Although these groups are often a minority, under the British voting system applying the majority principle, the reverse is true. A government with the support of just 19% of the electorate, can impose decisions on the majority. Few amongst this majority ever supported these policies. In terms of social coherence, the majority principle can be seen to be both illogical and destructive because it often results in contentious outcomes.

Majority decisions are invariably wrong

The majority principle certainly produces decisions but invariably, for a large segment of the population, they are the wrong decisions. This operation of "who has power prevails" is an affront which diminishes the freedom of expression of the people; an astounding situation.

But we need to arrive at decisions

A common position of politicians on the matter of individual preferences is to ask, "How on earth can it be possible to take decisions if everyone's preferences have to be taken into account?"

There are only two types of decision - aren't there?

They genuinely feel that there always has to be compromise and that trying to satisfy everyone will end up with less well-defined decisions with ineffective outcomes. This assumes that there are only two types of decision. One of massive compromise where everyone has their say but the decision is ineffective or where there is an incisive and effective decision where there are clear winners and losers. Indeed, political parties sustain this second option as a reality in general elections where there are indeed winners and losers. These decisions are taken on the basis of what constitutes a crusade with the victors riding over the fallen. This creates in Parliament, a government and an opposition but in reality it is an institution run exclusively by the winners. The opposition therefore, throughout the life of a Parliament, act out their role as losers. This whole system presumes that, no matter what the decision, there will always be incompatible individual preferences and that it is impossible to end up with unanimous decisions. It is as if good decisions, it would seem, can only be confrontational and contentious. The logic to this point of view is that unanimous decision needs to assume that there is a complete convergence of preferences. Therefore, the critical question is to ask under what conditions do preferences diverge or converge?

The evidence

The review of general elections, Parliament and the House of Lords in this book has identified several common fundamental weaknesses related to the habit of political parties to prepare and disseminate inappropriate and inadequate information. Each political party does not make the full facts available but will promote their version of the truth. This results in an inability of most people to have access to the full facts and therefore this also prevents the political parties ascertaining the real preferences of the electorate.

It is often not perceived that the outstanding success of the jury system has been that it remains uncorrupted by the influence of political parties as well as any process linked to the general election, Parliament, legislation, the House of Lords, lobbies and, indeed, politicians. Its vital contributions to constitutional principles in the defence of freedom have been based upon the common sense of the community conscience which, on occasions, has been directed towards the nullification of unfair laws. The most notable aspect of juries is that with nearly 800 years of application, they have been able to arrive at unanimous decisions on crucially important matters; in other words, the preferences of the jury members usually converged around a single decision. This has been made possible as a direct outcome of juries, made up of members of the electorate, being provided, under normal circumstances, with appropriate and adequate information.

We have here two vital pieces of historic evidence to demonstrate the degree to which free expression prevails in the decision-making processes and according to who has overall control of the process. The two processes are summarized below:

Decision-making controlled by political parties

1. Members of the public with differing individual preferences have, for some 175 years, not been able to assess political propositions for lack of objective information during the course of general elections. They have therefore had difficulty in finding a common position on the basis of their free will and through a convergence of their preferences around any unique decisions. This is also exacerbated by their being prevented from passing opinions and influencing any subsequent Parliamentary deliberations.

Conclusion: Representation of preferences, as the expression of free will, is non-existent.

Decision-making controlled by the community conscience

2. Members of the public with differing individual preferences have, for almost 800 years, been able to assess arguments on the basis of good information, during the course of trials, and to find a common position on the basis of their free will and through a convergence of their preferences around a unique decision.

Conclusion: Representation of preferences as the expression of free will is sustained since this has been the enduring and supreme basis of its operation.

Juries & informed logic - the other dimension to decision-making

Juries, therefore demonstrate another possible outcome for decision-making which is neither highly compromised nor one which is contentious and only involving winners and losers. The jury system embraces real and diverse preferences and through a rational application of informed logic, achieves, without any imposition, a convergence of preferences around a common decision on the basis of free will.

Informed logic

Informed logic has a very specific meaning in the context of this discussion and is a composite of the following definitions:

- Informed signifies: instructed, knowing the facts, educated, intelligent
- Logic signifies: the science of reasoning, proof, inference and chain of reasoning.

Informed logic involves the application of inference and reasoning based upon access to the full and true facts. The fact that informed logic contains aspects of instruction and education (learning) adds a time dimension to the process of decision making since individuals cannot be expected to know the full facts pertaining to a specific issue until they are presented with them. Once they have access to such information they can assimilate and apply what they learn from this information by analysing it by applying their own personal abilities and experience. This normally leads to each person adjusting his or her preferences accordingly.

Preferences in a secular state

Personal preferences can refer to a range of person tastes such as a person's favourite ice cream flavour to personal preferences on matters such as philosophical commitment or faith (religion). People can have a range of personal likes and dislikes over a range of topics. However, these preferences are more intimately related to each person and are therefore personal preferences. Many personal preferences can be declaratory or faith-based and are not evidence-based. The issues likely to be subject of policy and legislation affect society as a whole and relate to another class of preferences known as social preferences. Social preferences are an importance basis for sustaining comity and in general these are reviewed on the basis of evidence-based discourse (90). Normally social preferences do not make up a long list of pre-established views. People will formulate such preferences according to circumstances and when required to express a preference their response will not always be immediate since there is a need to assess the options. This is particularly true when the issue involves something the individual has never had to address before. This is why, in such cases, informed logic and time for consideration are so relevant.

Filling in the gaps

It is evident that information disseminated by political parties and government is largely inadequate and often biased and partisan. This is not a basis for the electorate to assess

policies, any policy options and to decide with any confidence their preferences. Adequate information, if complete and reflecting the full facts, can help people identify genuine points of interest to them as well make it easier for them to detect gaps in information and therefore ask more relevant questions.

It is evident that leaving the preparation of such information to political parties will never result in good information even more so because they have insufficient human resources to undertake such work. Their relying upon interest groups or lobbies to provide such information often ends up with "cherry picking" and a final biased and partisan output.

The making available of a common body of high-quality information and knowledge is of fundamental importance in the development of firm preferences. Such information also provides the foundation to the development of a feasible response by governance with policies which attempt to satisfy the preferences of the people and thereby reflect the will of the people.

Free and happy

The Levellers desired that the nation should be free and happy. To achieve happiness through the satisfaction of preferences requires the removal of illusions and false promises. This can only be achieved by basing preferences on attainable objectives, which in turn can only be founded in fact.

Real preferences & individual freedom

A fundamentally important measure in the success of governments in upholding freedom is the degree to which they satisfy real preferences (91). Real preferences operate at two levels:

- real social preferences
- real policy preferences

Real social preferences

A preference can be described as a preferred state. However, preferences only have practical significance if they are achievable. Therefore, the utility of any preference depends upon the probability that the preferred state is achievable.

The definition of a real social preference is that it is a specific class of preference which is achievable, that is it is realistic.

Real policy preferences

A policy preference can be described as a preferred method to satisfy stated social preferences through a policy decision. However, policies are not always successful in achieving desired outcomes. Therefore, the utility of a policy preference depends upon the likelihood that it will achieve the stated objectives.

The definition of a real policy preference is that it is a specific class of policy action which is attainable, that is its objective is realistic.

Real preferences & policies

From these definitions it is apparent that the challenge facing political decision-makers is to identify real social preferences and then to address these with real policy preferences. This is the only basis upon which government can succeed in responding to the will of the people.

Therefore, a practical measure of how any government acts to uphold individual freedom of expression is the extent of their effort to engage people to discover what their real social preferences are and then propose real policy preferences to satisfy these.

Unreal preferences & unreal policy preferences

The process of determining real social preferences is not a simple process for any government. Part of the problem is that at one extreme it is possible for some of the electorate to have been misled and therefore to have unattainable ambitions expressed as unrealistic social preferences. It is self-evident that policies trying to address these will fail. On the other hand, it is also possible for people to have realistic social preferences but proposed government solutions, which promise to address them, fail in practice. This could be the result of fundamental oversights at policy planning stages, inadequate information or poor implementation management.

Knowledge & preferences

In the light of good knowledge, experience and new information it is possible for people to end up with achievable, real social preferences. The only way to satisfy these is to implement proposals shaped by the same knowledge, experience and new information. Naturally the better the quality of information the more decisions should achieve expected outcomes. Accordingly, to sustain a free and happy state of affairs, successful political actions and the preferences driving them must both be founded in the same facts.

In Britain, the dissemination and access to consistently objective and good quality information has not been a prominent feature of the political process. Competing political parties have sought to influence information content and the "facts" to present partisan versions of the "truth". Any real preferences and real policy preferences have therefore drifted apart. Universal suffrage and the majority principle, first-past-the-post general elections and majority voting in Parliament have not been successful in responding to people's social preferences. As a result, individual freedom has eroded across a broad front and for too long.

The general election outcome as a misrepresentation of real preferences

The general election outcome is restricted to pre-decisions (see page 56) because of poor quality information and a failure to allow second opinions on policies. This has two significant and serious implications for the free expression of preferences:

Universal suffrage on the basis of debased votes

1. This system debases the value of the vote since people cannot know exactly what they are voting for and quite often the vote is based upon the biased information making up the party's promise to deliver. This means that the final vote represents a leap of faith on the part of those who vote.

Suppression of individual expression of preferences through misrepresentation

2. The vote cannot reflect real preferences of voters since by definition this can only be secured on the basis of an accurate and complete set of information on a policy and its implications. Real preferences can only be determined on the basis of rational evidence-based discourse.

Misallocation of votes

Since real social preferences and real policy preferences can only be expressed on the basis of informed logic, the British general election system fails to serve this need and only deceives. On this basis the process of pre-decisions will misallocate votes. This is because a proportion of votes will, without the voter's knowledge at the time of the general election, not reflect their own real preference but rather a position arrived at without adequate information. If better information were available then the general election could better reflect real preferences. On the other hand, the combination of several, sometimes, conflicting policies in a single manifesto further removes the objectivity and ability of the general election to reflect real preferences.

Election fraud

Accordingly, the current voting system contains an unknown level of misrepresentation of voter preferences affecting the outcomes (vote share) of all political parties.

In statistical terms, with a governing party winning on just 19% of electorate support, the extent of the inability of the general election to reflect real electorate preferences could be significant. The general election process is flawed because the way votes are cast is the result of guidance based upon misrepresentation (incomplete information). This fraud is therefore another basis for invalidating general elections.

Establishing voter preferences - better information imperative for authentic representation

The whole problem lies in the failure to establish conditions whereby voters can make decisions on the basis of informed logic. General election votes can only represent real voter preferences if the quality of information provided concerning policies is sound, accurate and complete.

Political parties - very much part of the problem & not really part of the solution

Political parties, in their current form, are very unlikely to address this serious issue of election fraud because they themselves do not always know the full implications of their own policies. Because the information they release is biased towards their own partisan viewpoints and predilections, therefore cannot know precisely the real electorate preferences so cannot respond with real policy preferences. This seems to be a result of their over-obsession with power, which seriously distorts priorities, combined with their inability to provide the electorate with more appropriate and complete information.

Marketing in place of communication

Political parties seem to have ended up in a situation of marketing their own wares as opposed to finding out what wares are in fact desired. In a secular state they seem to approximate more and more the activities of churches supporting an undefined religion known as democracy. Thorstein Veblen (76), on the topic of marketing, considered the Church to be the supreme example of success in that it has encouraged people to pay up for almost 2,000 years but has never delivered the goods. It would seem that British governance, under the currently weak and unresponsive party system, qualifies for a similar dubious merit.

The need for rational common sense

It is evident that the collection, preparation and distribution of information relevant to preference formation as well as policy identification need to be managed in a highly competent and independent manner.

Decision analysis

The process of applying informed logic to decisions is a rational process known as decision analysis. Decision analysis is a methodology (92) for ensuring that all of the relevant facts have been evaluated in the design and assessment of the likely outcome of a proposal. Normally a proposal will be a description of a means to provide a practical solution to some social objective on the basis of policy. Decision analysis provides the critical information to help achieve a common position by providing each person participating in a decision with information on:

- the full and relevant facts
- the essential relationships which define solution options
- the relationships which determine the outcome of each option
- the logic of a transparent and complete analysis of each option

Probability

Decision analysis is also applied to determine the necessary quality of information required to take good decisions. So, if the relevant cause and effect relationships are not known then information might be gathered to determine these more precisely. On the other hand, existing information on cause and effect relationships might not be detailed enough to provide sufficient confidence of the likelihood of achieving predicted outcomes so more information would be collected and analysed.

Decision analysis for policy

The nature of democracy is that it involves everyone. That is, people with diverse ages, interests, capabilities, education, experience and preferences. In spite of this enormous diversity all people share a common sense and an ability to deduce founded in logic. Usually the missing part of the puzzle, when a decision needs to be taken, is sound decision analysis. Decision analysis has an advantage in that it can be subjected to strict conditions of impartiality and standards of evidence. It can therefore be applied as the method of helping provide and organize the other missing link for decision-makers, the identification of all needed information to take a decision.

And preferences...?

Well-executed decision analysis can assist in helping people understand relationships, options and implications of policy with an acceptable degree of confidence. It can help resolve honestly held differences in opinion and preferences based upon life experience and perceptions. People's opinions and preferences will often change as a result of being exposed to better information, learning more of implications and sometimes of the feasibility of options never known or considered before.

Such a basis for enlightenment is far more rational, profound and decisive than any political rhetoric based upon largely biased information designed to encourage support for the party preference.

Truth as reality reflected in shifting priors

For a person's preferences to have any value at all they need to reflect achievable objectives. Thus, preferences based on a poor appreciation of reality are of lower value than preferences based upon a full knowledge of the facts. Priors are personal assessments of the probability

that a specific relationship exists or that a specific event might occur. Therefore, if trusted information showing true probabilities demonstrates that a person's priors, his expectations, are unrealistic, then a rational individual will adjust his priors. This does not involve any form of imposition but rather, through an expression of the free choice of each person, they will tend to shift their priors to positions within the realms of reality (91). This tendency for people to try and keep their expectations within the realms of feasibility is both rational and natural. The confidence with which people hold their preferences is based upon their assessment of the likelihoods of outcomes or priors. Therefore, the process of prior adjustment described also causes a convergence of previously divergent preferences. Based upon family and life experience, the majority of the population will always opt for "what works" and what works, of course, has to be something lying within the realms of reality. This is why the provision of sound and impartially presented information causes people with originally divergent preferences to end up around common positions where their expectations and therefore preferences have converged. This is the process followed by the jury in achieving unanimous decisions.

The implications of decision analysis experience

One of the remarkable outcomes of decision analysis is that it is often the case that after information and options have been reviewed and criteria for selection, such as costs, are applied there might be just one or two good and feasible options; usually there is just one.

This demonstrates that on the basis of the full facts and by applying the appropriate "state of the art technology" (93) even if there were "competing" political party proposals, there is often only one practical option. Since the decision analysis process helps preferences to converge then the free expression of the electorate based upon informed logic, would tend to select just the one and only superior option.

This reality throws into question the wasteful process of political parties vying on the basis of imperfect information and promoting alternative policies which when put to the test and a full decision analysis might well not rank amongst the better options.

Decision analysis can be used to optimise solutions around important considerations established as criteria for giving preference to one option over another. Such so-called "decision-maker preferences" might be the minimization of costs, the ease of use of the resulting system or service by the public, the highest rate of investment return and others. This more impartial, neutral and non-partisan process provides a basis for identifying solutions with the potential for achieving a more efficient use of public funds associated with their implementation.

Decision analysis in not exclusive

Decision analysis is essentially applied common sense. It is not an exclusive approach to decision-making but can incorporate a wide range of methodologies and analytical techniques depending upon the particular issue being addressed. Indeed, the methodologies commonly applied in decision analysis are well-established proven practice. The use of the term "decision analysis" became more widely used in the mid-1960s resulting from work by Ronald A. Howard at Stanford University. This incorporates a wide range of existing and proven mathematical, statistical, logic and operations research techniques. Amongst older-established decision-making techniques is "project evaluation" or "project appraisal" which tends to be more specifically geared to assessing the technical, economic and financial implications of single investment proposal, including those of government. These are commonly used to justify most international loans and grants advanced to governments by multinational finance organizations.

The main advantage of decision analysis, as described, is that it is a way of ensuring that all of the relevant facts have been adequately reviewed across a set of options before any decision is taken.

The myth of conveying complexity

Quite often, a bad teacher will either ask students to accept something on the basis of faith or simplify a subject matter to such an extent that truth becomes distorted and rather than becoming enlightened the students become confused. Indeed, this sort of teaching can be quite damaging. Normally a good teacher can take a very complex domain of knowledge and convey its content in simple and precise terms, step by step.

There is a tendency for some to consider that it is beyond the capacity of most people to comprehend the complexity of reality. This is a myth. In reality, if those who manage the information to be presented have a comprehensive knowledge of the domain in question and they also understand the critical relationships within that domain, then it is normally possible to communicate these in a straightforward and intelligible way to any person with normal intelligence. Decision analysis can achieve this purpose, no matter how complex the topic.

The fundamental proof of the reality of the possibility of breaking complex topics down into simpler and intelligible rules or statements lies within the brilliant work of George Boole (94) who developed the logic of how humans deduce and think. Understanding the complexity of nature is a topic addressed by Ronald Fisher (95) in the domain of statistics. As an overall approach to support a balanced society Alfred Korzybski (96) provided important contributions to how humans perceive reality as well as the importance of knowledge to social development.

What is needed in support of freedom

To rid decision-making of contention and discord and to distance political discourse from an undignified squabble, there is a need for the people of the country to be able to access the relevant information on all matters of concern to them. At the moment there exists a massive hiatus in the body of appropriate information and knowledge in the arenas where policies are proposed and discussed and decided upon. A true convergence of opinion and preferences remains beyond our reach because of information bias and the control of the information management process by partisan interests and the media. Too much of the positions of political parties demand a leap of faith on the part of the electorate, too little of their argument is evidence-based. In a secular state such a declaratory basis for influencing the public is unacceptable. There is a fundamental need for an introduction of appropriate decision analysis efforts in all areas of policy making as an objective and impartial process for the collection, analysis and presentation of the full facts.

And the majority principle?

Achieving a convergence of preferences around common solutions relies on a procedural matter of guaranteeing the dissemination and consideration of all relevant facts. But differences in preferences can persist for valid reasons and defending people's individual freedom of expression remains an overriding imperative. The next chapter describes a constitutional principle, the minority principle, which upholds individual freedom by substituting the majority principle.

NOTES – as presented in original text of *The Briton's Quest for Freedom*

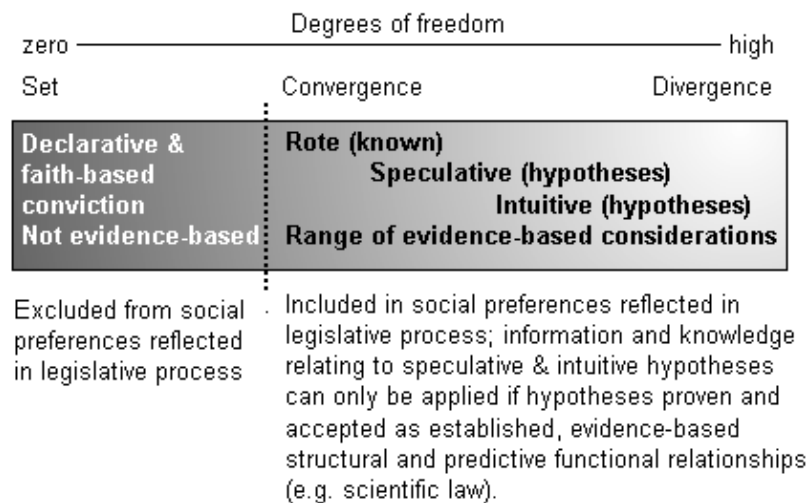
90 - ex: **Secularity issues and social preferences.** To prevent the kinds of excess experienced under religious states where clerics and religious authorities harmed those of other religions,

secularism is of fundamental importance. For example, the Puritans in Massachusetts in America sought a new society of religious freedom but this freedom only applied to them. Because other religions, for example, Quakers, questioned "given truths" they were banished from Massachusetts. Those who returned, such as Mary Dyer, were executed (1660). So, the condition of "religious freedom" is seldom a state sustained by another religion but is rather something best protected by secular provisions. The interpretation of religious truths is a matter for clerics bound by no political constraints or secular law and for this reason secularism provides more stability. On the other hand, experience has shown that the social and destructive extremes of societies ruled by leaders who apply declarative "truth" are not only faith-based and orientated towards some religion but political parties can move into a declarative mode of top down rule. Such extremes were, and are, observed under Communism just as these were exposed under the Nazis and Fascists.

Therefore, the secular state is one which excludes the imposition or use of arguments which are declarative or faith-based. This situation is represented in the diagram below.

The left-hand side represents a domain where decisions are taken on the basis of conviction, faith-based truths or declarative positions with little or no reference to evidence-based argument. The domain however is that enjoyed by many different people who adhere to different beliefs. The operation of secularism needs to preclude such considerations from those social preferences used to make up legislative proposals so as to avoid impositions on anyone who is a non-adherent. At the same time legal provisions should not constitute imposition on adherents as long as practice of adherents does not harm any other people.

Declarative-secular division



2005, McNeill. H. W.

The range of social preferences reflected in legislative provisions, and including those from who are adherents to different beliefs, involve more practical matters resolved on the basis of propositions developed on the basis of evidence-based analysis. Evidence ranges from known and established relationships to those being developed on the basis of speculative analysis by testing hypotheses as well as an outcome of more divergent thinking which might be considered to be "intuitive" but which can lead to evidence-based discoveries on the basis of testing a new hypothesis.

The scale of differences between convergence and divergence are explained in notes 10, 11 & 88.

91 - ex: **Real preferences.**

The full facts: Real preferences are ascertained by providing people with the full facts on policy objectives, how it would be implemented and the implications of it entering into force.

Less than the full facts: It is not possible to ascertain real preferences based upon any proposition where the full facts are not made available. This is because it is not possible to ascertain the objectives, methods of implementation and therefore its implications in practice. Under such circumstances, at most, people can only indicate notional preferences or pre-decisions. Pre-decisions can only become real preferences once full facts have been made available and people are provided with the opportunity to reassess their preferences. On this basis, pre-decisions can be transformed to final decisions.

Information and elections as a basis for reflecting real preferences: It is quite possible for a pre-decision supporting a proposal to become a final decision opposing a proposal once full facts are known. Depending upon the information which was missing at the time of a general election, either through error or intent, the percentage of initial pre-decisions supporting a proposal and which will become decisions opposed to the proposal will vary. However, it is quite evident that votes based upon pre-decisions, that is expressions made on the basis of incomplete information, will not reflect real preferences.

The divergence & convergence of preferences: Individuals brought up in the same family under the same general circumstances with respect to standard of living, education and state of health often have differing political views and preferences. There are two basic circumstances where the preferences of people converge to the point of supporting unanimity and these relate to two different contexts of human decision-making:

- physically and psychologically driven logic
- intellectually informed logic

Physically and psychologically driven logic: At the emotive, psychological and physiological levels people who would normally have widely different priorities and associated preferences can find commonality in preferences and priorities in the case of some sort of emergency or social calamity. Normally a priority for a common action may arise from a failed harvest, destructive floods or even a military attack. Under such conditions there is a natural tendency for different people's preferences to coincide round a common motivation expressed as a preference to solve the problem. Solutions might be feed those without food, rescue people marooned by the flood and repulse the attack.

Historically, the resolution of widespread suffering imposed by tyrannical leaders created conditions for change achieved through violent as well as by peaceful means.

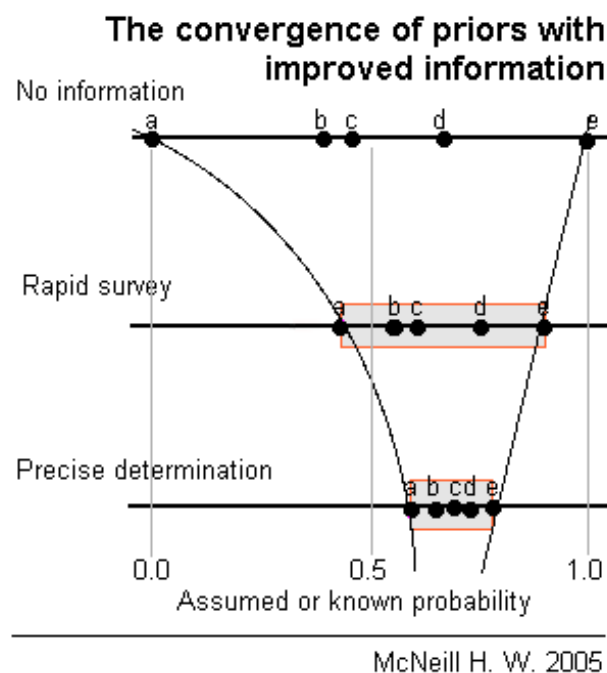
In all cases, once the more obvious problems causing suffering and deep social concern had been removed the relevance of overriding coincidental preferences declines. The natural distinctions between personal priorities and differences in individual and social preferences re-emerge; sibling expression reasserts itself.

Scare tactics: In peace time, for example on the issues of crime and militant actions (terrorism) directed against society, there is a tendency for politicians to exaggerate the risks. This is interpreted to be a way of applying psychology to galvanise public opinion around a common preference to support government policies addressing such issues.

In all such cases the motivation for convergence of preferences are less intellectually driven and relates to immediate psychological needs (freedom from fear) and physiological needs (for example, freedom from hunger).

Priors, expectations & the convergence of preferences: A prior is the expectation a person that some relationship exists or that an event will occur. It can be expressed in terms of a likelihood or probability. Priors are established on the basis of experience and they shape the location of people's preferences. Thus well informed people have more realistic priors or expectations and therefore their preferences are more likely to be achievable.

If impartial and objective information is collected by a person whom 5 people consider to be honest and competent, then before that person states what the likelihood of an event is the 5 people might have the prior distribution illustrated in the top line in the diagram below.



A rapid survey might establish that the probability in fact lies between 0.45 and 0.90. This means that the people concerned, having learned more about where reality lies, will adjust their priors and indeed real preferences in accord with this new knowledge. This is shown on the second, middle line, in the diagram. However, this range in the estimate might not be precise enough so by undertaking more information collection a more accurate range of between 0.60 and 0.80 might be established. Priors will be adjusted yet again as will preferences.

The outcome is that people who started the exercise with divergent real preferences end up with converged real preferences solely on the basis of better information and knowledge.

Freedom of expression & no coercion: It is important to note that this process operates entirely on the basis of the assimilation of better information and the voluntary adjustment of priors and preferences so as to reflect reality. There is a complete freedom of expression on the part of each person involved.

Just as there can be no real preferences without the full facts to there can be not effective free expression there being the full facts to guide free expression. Such free expression can only use used to establish and satisfy real preferences, through a decision, if all people trust the source of information as being free from intentional bias and if, indeed, the source of information is thorough, impartial and objective. Error arising from normal survey and analysis would be accepted but people can demand more rigorous and accurate information so as to reduce such errors.

Full facts as truth: Fundamental to the success of this process is the confidence of the users of such information that it represents the full facts; it recounts the truth. Truth however is not absolute in the sense that almost no decisions are based upon the whole truth but rather are based upon the decision makers arriving at a point where they feel the probability of achieving their objective is sufficiently high as to cause them to have the confidence to take a decision. In a parallel to the case of juries, decision analysis provides the relevant information and analyses for people to take a decision without reasonable doubts

Precipitating decisions through scare mongering: Informed logic can also be a counter to tactics of scare mongering as a form of applied psychology aimed at galvanizing public opinion around a common preference for proposed government policies. Such recent attempts by government include justification for the invasion of Iraq, general anti-terrorism legislation and acceptance of the European Arrest Warrant.

Better information or intelligence is the only basis to place the true circumstances in perspective and thereby identify appropriate solutions.

92 - ex: **Decision analysis:** Decision analysis is a methodology to help decision-makers select a preferable option to achieve a stated objective. Decision analysis ensures that essential information is collected and assessed in terms of quality and relevance and then analyzed to identify options and state of the art methods, practice and technology.

The decision analysis cycle: An idealized summary of the decision analysis process was produced by Ronald A. Howard of Stanford University in "*An introduction to Decision Analysis*", Matheson J.E. & Howard R.A., Decision Analysis Group, Stanford Research Institute, 1968. This can be summarized as the decision analysis cycle and in diagrammatic form is presented below:

The cycle involves three phases or steps before a decision might be taken:

- deterministic
- probabilistic
- informational

The Decision Analysis Cycle

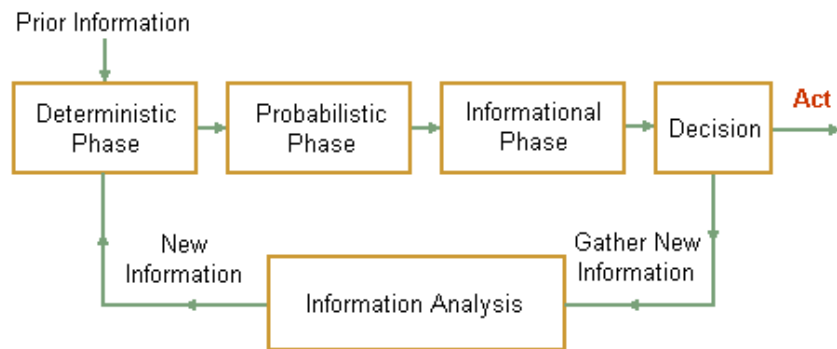


Diagram from "*an Introduction to Decision Analysis*", McNeill, H.W., SEEL, March, 2007, GBI, wa.

Deterministic: The deterministic phase involves a review the ways to achieve objectives is undertaken where the production/process functions to be applied are defined. This is based on state-of-the-art methods, practice and technology.

Probabilistic: The probabilistic phase involves an assessment of the likelihood that the assumptions made and the options produced would produce the outcomes expected. Where there is a lack of confidence on the ability of an option to achieve the objective required then there is a need to collect more precise and specific information.

Informational: The information phase involves the collection and analysis of additional information on those aspects of relationships and functions used in identifying and designing options to address the decision objectives.

Decision: If decision-makers are satisfied with the quality of information and the relationships and functions used to identify options then a decision can be taken.

If the decision-makers do not have enough confidence to take decisions then the required information to improve confidence would be gathered, analyzed and input to the identification of the options by improving the deterministic, probabilistic and informational phases.

93 - ex: **State of the art.** State of the art is the current state of technology and associated practice which works successfully.

94- ex: **George Boole - deduction, understanding essentials, preferences & taking decisions:** On the question of being able to take decisions on complex topics we come up against the issue of how people deduce things from what they know and learn. How people deduce and make decisions was well established by the brilliant work of George Boole (1815-1864) a self-taught Englishman who developed the theory and the specific mathematical logic of deduction broadly referred to as Boolean Logic. Boole published his findings on how people arrive at conclusions in 1854 in a book entitled, "The Laws of Thought". Naturally the way in which people arrive at conclusions, on any particular matter, is influenced by their personal inclinations or culture based on experience and their knowledge and experience of the domain in question. Boole's work provided the rationale and methodology for reducing complex logical

relationships to simpler sets of relationships or rules or answers to questions. These rules are capable of reproducing all of the possible relationships from which the set was derived. This process is known as Boolean reduction. The success of modern digital circuitry design and manufacturing, including micro-devices and the computer industry based upon these, rests directly upon the practical utility of these same procedures of Boolean reduction. George Boole's objective in developing this approach to logic was to explain how individuals use information and knowledge to deduce and express preferences by taking decisions.

95 - ex: **Ronald Aylmer Fisher** (1890-1962) was a statistician, biologist and geneticist. He was the designer of a range of statistical methods used to this day and which have simplified experimental design and their analysis (such as analysis of variance) he was completely aware of the limitations inherent in such an approach. Thus:

"No aphorism is more frequently repeated in connection with field trials, than that we must ask Nature few questions, or, ideally one question at a time. The writer is convinced that this view is wholly mistaken. Nature will best respond to a logical and carefully thought out questionnaire, indeed, if we ask her a single question, she will often refuse to answer until some other topic has been discussed"

96 - ex: **Alfred Habdank Skarbek Korzybski** (1879-1950) was born in Warsaw, Poland and died in Lakeville, Connecticut, USA. He developed the theory of general semantics. In terms of applying our minds actively to agreement which requires thought, he advised that there are two ways to get through life without thinking are to believe everything or to doubt everything. But by dedicating ourselves to thinking he observed that in the (then) twentieth century, that the quarrels between two lovers, two mathematicians, two nations, two economic systems, usually assumed insoluble in a finite period should exhibit one mechanism, the semantic mechanism of identification - the discovery of which makes universal agreement possible, in mathematics and in life.

97 - ex & ref: **Locational-State Method**. "*Locational-State*", McNeill, H.W., ITTTF, Brussels, 1984. The Locational-State Method was developed in 1983 by the author as a basis for measuring and representing specifics as opposed to the measuring and representing generalities, as in statistics. This was developed as a tool for decision analysis, similar to the method of dimensions, to be used to determine the specifications of critical information requirements concerning any particular phenomenon of interest to be used in decision analysis. When applied to the human condition, that is the individual, it becomes a useful basis for recording all of the influences (states) on a person through time (chronological) and space (location). The outcome of the interaction of a person's genotype (genetic makeup) and the environment (including life style, diet, exposure to knowledge and experience in general) is what is known as the phenotypic expression of the genotype, or phenotype. Locational-State Theory provides a useful basis for describing the evolution of a person reflecting past experience. This is not limited to physical survival based on access to food and avoidance of danger but also to the competence of each person which has been shaped by experience and expressed in what each individual has learned or deduced from that experience and to what degree they can apply that knowledge to their own benefit as well as to others. One only has to observe the changing environment of any individual both within their original family environment and beyond the family to acknowledge that each person is truly unique in their experience and phenotypic expression.

This is why the temptation to generalize about people is irrational. Although political correctness expresses the advantages of diversity, the orientation of politics does not reflect a sufficient understanding of the nature and profound significance of this phenomenon. This is a root cause of suppression of individual freedom and expression.