

Mob Rule or the Wisdom of the Crowds? Reflections on Referendums and Policy

MATT QVORTRUP

“THREE STUPID SHOEMAKERS KNOW MORE than the wisest man,” goes an ancient Chinese saying. The argument—which is also an argument for democracy itself—is that the collective wisdom of the many is superior to the singular knowledge of the wise. Indeed, as the economist Friedrich Hayek, put it,

It might be said that civilization begins when the individual in pursuit of his ends can make use of more knowledge than he had himself acquired and when he can transcend the boundaries of his ignorance by profiting from knowledge he does not himself possess.¹

57

It follows from this logic that more direct democracy—that is, more referendums—will benefit public policymaking by involving more people in the process, as this will “transcend the boundaries” of the “knowledge” the small cabal of legislators possess. Hence, submitting controversial issues to the voters creates the chance for ill-conceived schemes pressed by the powerful few to be vetoed by a majority of everyday citizens.

This is not a new insight. Indeed, in the fourteenth century, the Italian political philosopher Marsilius of Padua opined, “The less learned citizen can sometimes perceive something that should be corrected with regard to a proposed law even though they would not have known how to discover it in the first place.”² This same argument is also known as the “collective wisdom” or “wisdom of the crowds”: the notion that citizens do not individually possess

MATT QVORTRUP is Professor of Political Science at Coventry University. An internationally renowned scholar of referendums and European politics, his most recent books include *Government by Referendum* (Manchester University Press, 2018) and *Angela Merkel: Europe's Most Influential Leader* (Duckworth, 2016). Professor Qvortrup is a regular commentator for the BBC.

Copyright © 2018 by the *Brown Journal of World Affairs*

great insight, but that their collective knowledge will ultimately weed out bad ideas.³ It is for this reason that countries with more provisions for referendums tend to do better than states run by less accountable elites. Put differently, referendums are like the “gun behind the door”: they create an incentive for politicians to not enact policies with uncertain consequences for fear that they may be vetoed by the people.⁴

Of course, there is another view. Some refer to it as “populism.” It is often a byword for the knee-jerk reactions of people who have been allegedly hoodwinked into voting for decisions they do not fully understand. It is fair to say that populism has been the most common view in the wake of controversial referendum results. Prominent examples include the 2016 vote in the United Kingdom to leave the European Union and the Colombian voters’ rejection of a peace plan with the FARC guerilla movement in the same year. Though, perhaps this assessment says more about the views and preferences of those criticizing the outcome of these referendums. You rarely hear the same complaint from those who endorsed these decisions!

This article contends that more referendums are desirable, as they result in lower levels of inequality, a general improvement in health, greater political participation, and greater knowledge of politics among members of the general public. This is a controversial position, and many pundits and politicians have rejected it. Although they acknowledge the attraction of referendums, putting complicated issues to a vote is anathema to some commentators. “Direct democracy is growing in popularity, but there is no substitute for well-informed decisions made by parliaments,” David Aaronovitch declared in the *Times* following the aforementioned Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom.⁵ The prominent pundit was not a great fan of the decision reached by 51.9 percent of British voters on 23 June 2016. The headline of “Referendums are great... if you are a dictator” was accompanied by a photo of Adolf Hitler—just to make sure we got the point.

It was, perhaps, to be expected that the losers would cry foul and denounce not only the result of the Brexit referendum but also the process that led to it. Indeed, we had seen these reactions before. There is a general tendency for members of the much maligned but vaguely defined “elite” to denounce referendums if the results do not suit their interests, aspirations, and preferences. In 2005, after France and the Netherlands had voted “no” to the European Constitution in very high profile referendums, José Manuel Barroso—the then president of the European Commission—denounced the trend towards letting the people decide, as it would, in his view, “undermine the Europe we are try-

ing to build by simplifying important and complex subjects.”⁶ Barroso, if he wanted to prove an elitist point, could have cited Plato’s tale in *The Republic* about the sagacious captain who was undermined by his reckless mariners, an allegory of the dangers of mob rule and populism.⁷ Or the one-time Maoist student leader-turned-conservative politician could have mentioned Antonio Gramsci, founder of the Italian Communist Party, who wrote that he was “on principle against the referendum,” as it would “place the active workers on the same plane as the lazy, ignorant and idle workers.”⁸

Democracy is a strange beast. Even the most notorious and villainous dictators claim allegiance to the creed of government by the people—albeit under the autocrats’ direction. Even Adolf Hitler declared that he was “steeped in the conviction that the authority of the state proceeds from the people and must be ratified by them in a free and secret referendum.”⁹ Hitler’s referendums, of course, were anything but free, and they were certainly not fair. We now know that the contemporary reports about his plebiscites—as reported in *American Political Science Review*—were, at best, misleading, gullible, and downright naïve.¹⁰ Historians have shown that even those interned in concentration camps were forced to vote in favor of Hitler’s proposals.¹¹

These bizarre historical events say very little about democratic referendums. The votes in dictatorships are, almost by definition, rigged. Moreover, the assertion that referendums are to be avoided because dictators have abused them in the past is only superficially convincing, and it rather conveniently ignores the fact that most autocratic regimes also hold elections. For example, in 2014, the Workers’ Party won 87

percent of the votes in the elections to the National Assembly in North Korea on a 100 percent turnout. Yet, we do not denounce representative democracy just because this system

Democracy is a strange beast. Even the most notorious and villainous dictators claim allegiance to the creed of government by the people—albeit under the autocrats’ direction.

formally prevails under Kim Jong-Un, let alone because there were elections to the Supreme Soviet in the days of the USSR, or because autocrats like Ferdinand Marcos and Benito Mussolini were elected. These elections are and were anything but free and fair. Referendums and elections held in dictatorships are inherently fixed, controlled, and subject to Stalin’s (likely apocryphal) insight: “The people who cast the *votes* decide nothing. The people who *count the votes* decide everything.” To conflate these elections with modern-day elections in

Western democracies is unjust.

But the main objection to referendums is that they lead to ill-considered decisions, as voters—so it is alleged—cannot directly negotiate or compromise. Theirs is a take-it-or-leave-it decision; the voters are left with the blunt choice of “yes” or “no,” and this arguably results in oversimplification and appeals to the lowest common denominator. The assertion by proponents of pure representative government always seems to be that parliaments, legislatures, assemblies, and other representative bodies by definition make better and more informed decisions because their members negotiate and debate. Former Swedish Prime Minister Tage Erlander, a Social Democrat, complained that “It becomes much harder to pursue an effective reform policy if reactionaries are offered the opportunity to appeal to people’s natural conservatism.”¹² But this, too, is a claim that often is not subjected to scrutiny and thus needs to be checked against the facts.

To be sure, legislative assemblies and parliaments can deliberate over decisions, hold hearings, and consult with stakeholders before passing legislation. But there is no guarantee that they will do so. Decisions made by parliaments and congresses are not always the result of careful considerations of the facts. The 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution is but one example of the reality that senators and representatives do not always reach what Aaronovitch termed “well-informed decisions.”¹³ The vote, historians have conclusively shown, was based on distorted facts and disinformation, yet an overwhelming majority voted to grant President Lyndon B. Johnson powers to fight the Vietnam War.¹⁴ The U.S. Congress, of course, is not alone in failing to reach mature decisions based on a careful balancing of evidence; the British Parliament voted to enact the Poll Tax in 1989 after minimal discussion and against the advice of most economists.¹⁵ A decade later, this legislature—based on flawed evidence—arguably followed the party whips rather than critical reasoning when it voted for involvement in the Iraq War in 2003. The assertion that members of the U.S. Congress or of British Parliament are sagacious beings appears inconsistent with reality at a time when partisanship and ideology often seem more important than national interests.

That legislators are often more ideologically driven than the people they represent is also sometimes conveniently forgotten. In 2000, Zimbabwe’s ruler Robert Mugabe lost a referendum on expropriation of land without compensation for white farmers by a 55–45 percent margin. The setback did not deter his ZANU-PF party from adopting the measure by a parliamentary vote later that year.

Of course, the shortcomings of the people’s representatives do not imply that the voters themselves will necessarily reach informed decisions. American

writer E.B. White once remarked that “Democracy is the recurrent suspicion that more than half of the people are right more than half of the time.”¹⁶ But that is, as he readily admitted, a “suspicion” rather than a fact. To assess the desirability of letting the voters decide directly, we need to look at the real-world evidence. Do referendums result in ill-considered decisions? Or can the collective wisdom of the people improve the lives of citizens?

THE SCHOLARLY VIEW

In light of the well-publicized misgivings about referendums and their effects, it is somewhat surprising that many philosophers throughout the ages have eulogized public participation and have stressed that ordinary voters can provide a reality check for politicians bent upon legislative haste. The philosopher Aristotle completed his analysis of more than 100 ancient constitutions by concluding that the collective wisdom of the crowds is superior to the knowledge of the wise man: “For each individual has a share of excellence and practical wisdom, and when they meet together, just as they become in a manner one man [...] the many are better judges than a single man.”¹⁷

As we saw in the introductory quote about the Chinese shoemakers, this idea of the wisdom of the crowds was not confined to the Western Hemisphere. By allowing ordinary people to veto decisions, hasty and ill-considered ideas can be weeded out; the collective wisdom of the many forms a barrier against the law of unintended consequences.

The lesson drawn from these classical Chinese, Greek, and medieval thinkers was that a modicum of popular involvement would enable governments to tap into the wisdom of the crowds, but also that too much involvement could have adverse consequences and result in mob rule. More recently, economists analyzing the effects of representative democracies have discovered a number of referendum-related advantages.¹⁸ Countries without provisions for referendums allow politicians to serve special interest groups, and they often remain situated in the pockets of powerful bureaucracies with vested interests, as is the case particularly in Japan and Belgium. Moreover, politicians in pure representative democracies are likely to be more responsive to the party organizations that choose the candidates than to ordinary, less ideologically-driven voters. This view was summed up in a recent study:

Representatives can be captured by special interest groups that engage in rent-seeking activities. Rent-seeking involves redistributing income from those groups in society which are not successfully lobbying the

government to those which are [...] These considerations suggest that, from a societal point of view, income redistribution in representative democracies is inefficient as actual redistribution deviates from the preferred level and as those groups might benefit which are not the neediest ones.¹⁹

On the other hand, politicians refrain from passing acts that run counter to the voters' preferences if it is possible for the legislation to be undone through citizen-initiated referendums or initiatives.²⁰ Of course, this does not imply that referendums should—or even could—replace representative government. Referendums are a complement, not an alternative. Indeed, even in countries such as Switzerland, the country with the highest number of referendums, less than 5 percent of all laws are subject to a popular vote.

Thus far, I have merely presented quotes and assertions. Whether referendums are a recipe for policy-illiterate populism or a healthy antidote to unaccountable elitists captured by narrow special interests is, however, an empirical question. To measure the effect of direct democracy we simply need to identify the countries that have provisions for referendums and initiatives and then compare the levels of economic growth, general well-being, and other policy outcomes with states that do not have these provisions.

62 In the world of direct democracy there are two types of votes: referendums and initiatives. The former are public votes on laws already passed by legislatures. Initiatives, by contrast, are votes on laws proposed by the citizens themselves, typically after they have gathered a specified number of signatures. In Switzerland, the requirement is 100,000 citizens or 6 percent of the electorate. In California, it takes on average the same percentage to initiate a vote—albeit from a much larger population.²¹

At first sight, the misgivings expressed by opponents of direct democracy appear to be overstated. Research by political economists seems to suggest that referendums and initiatives have a policy effect and that representatives in states with provisions for direct democracy are more responsive to the voters' preferences. What is more, the research suggests that direct democracy has an effect on public policy outcomes.²² Whether these "tests" are convincing is a matter to which we shall return to below.

Admittedly, most of this research has focused on countries and jurisdictions where referendums and initiatives are held frequently, including Switzerland and U.S. states such as Oregon, California, and Arizona. However, there is also evidence to suggest that referendums can have a statistical effect in countries where they are relatively rare. But we cannot simply compare the two. As David

Butler and Austin Ranney noted in a pioneering study, there are two worlds of direct democracy:

On the one hand, in Switzerland, California, and a few other states of the American union, initiatives and referendums are prominent strands in the fabric of political life. Their potential for making and unmaking policies is ever present in the minds of legislators and lobbyists. On the other hand, in other countries referendums are held infrequently usually only when governments think they are likely to provide a useful ad hoc solution to a particular constitutional or political problem.²³

A fair assessment cannot compare these two worlds. There is a vast qualitative difference between places where referendums are an integral part of everyday political life and places where referendums are held as infrequently as once or twice a decade. There is a world of difference between, at one extreme, the countries with initiatives, where a certain percentage of voters propose new legislation (as in many American states and Swiss cantons) and, at the other end, the relatively infrequent referendums on constitutional amendments, which are supposed to give voters a check on the legislative haste of an overzealous legislature (an example being the Australian voters' vetoing of a bill to ban the Communist Party in 1951).

But what does all of this mean in practical terms? Are initiatives and referendums compatible with good governance and, ultimately, better lives for a nation's people? Can we detect an effect of having provisions for referendums where referendums are held infrequently?

Analyses of Swiss referendums and initiatives have shown that their use is associated with lower inequality. Overall, the statistical evidence suggests that "stronger popular rights appear to decrease pre-tax and post-tax income inequality."²⁴ In other words,

more direct democracy results in greater equality—just as Alexis de Tocqueville famously predicted in *Democracy in America*.²⁵ This find-

Research by political economists seems to suggest representatives in states with provisions for direct democracy are more responsive to voters' preferences.

ing seems to substantiate the reservations expressed by conservative opponents of referendums at the beginning of the twentieth century. When the Populists (a largely leftist movement emerging at the end of the nineteenth century) succeeded in their endeavors to get their initiative into the California Constitution, an editorial in the *Los Angeles Times* warned that "radical legislation would result,

and business and property rights would be subject to constant turmoil at the hands of the agitators.”²⁶ This was, of course, an exaggeration, although it seems that direct democracy is more likely to result in policy outcomes espoused by the political left.

However, the world of frequent referendums is not that simple; voters, in a sense, can have their proverbial democratic cake and eat it too. The evidence also suggests that U.S. states with provisions for initiatives have lower taxes and smaller budget deficits than states where legislatures alone control the purse strings.²⁷ Similar findings have been reported in Switzerland, where, like in the United States, distinct cantons may or may not have provisions for citizen-initiated legislation.²⁸

Of course, having lower levels of taxation is not a goal in itself. For the late *Washington Post* columnist David Broder, California’s Proposition 13 vote in 1978, which led to a reduction in property taxes, was to blame for falling education standards in the Golden State.²⁹ Consistent with the findings from the United States, the Swiss jurisdictions with most provisions for referendums and initiatives also have lower levels of taxation and tend to make ends meet even on a tighter budget.³⁰ Lower taxes *and* less inequality seem like two incompatible outcomes, yet these are the tendencies in countries and jurisdictions with many referendums and initiatives. It is difficult to explain with any degree of certainty why this is so, but it might be that politicians try harder not to spend taxpayers’ money if they are in danger of being undercut by the electors in referendums. Following a similar logic, it might be that the selfsame legislators simply have an incentive to introduce more egalitarian measures lest they should incur the wrath of voters who are concerned about inequality.

REFERENDUMS IN REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACIES

Switzerland and the United States, two countries that frequently use referendums, are democratic anomalies. In California, there are a half-dozen referendums and initiatives per electoral cycle; in Switzerland, there are double that number.³¹ In the second world of the referendum, which includes Western Europe as well as Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, the average number of referendums per electoral cycle is considerably lower—often less than one referendum for every parliament.³²

In these cases, simply correlating the number of referendums with various policy outcomes is statistical nonsense, as a referendum once or twice every decade is unlikely to have profound policy effects—though Brexit may prove

to be the exception to this rule due to its far-reaching implications.

Can we measure or detect an effect of relatively rare referendums? We know that countries with provisions for referendums are more likely to use them; in Denmark and Ireland, where the constitutions contain clear provisions for referendums, politicians often resort to submitting controversial issues, even mundane ones, to the people. Hence, one could speculate that the mere existence of provisions for referendums could have policy consequences.

This might seem far-fetched, and yet there is, at least statistically speaking, some evidence that this theory is more than mere speculation. Using figures from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), it seems that countries with constitutional provisions for initiatives and referendums have higher levels of equality. Using the Pearson Correlation Coefficient technique, where a perfect correlation is 1 and no correlation is 0, a .48 correlation exists between provisions for legislative referendums and equality, and a .68 correlation exists between equality and provisions for the initiative.³³ To put this figure into perspective, the correlation between smoking and lung cancer is .51.

Furthermore, many countries with provisions for citizen-initiated referendums also have better levels of public health, holding a .30 Pearson Correlation.³⁴ Referendums on public healthcare systems have consistently shown that voters demand high public spending on them. For example, voters rejected fees for going to the doctor in Hungary in 2008; similarly, voters approved a November 2017 expansion of Medicare in Maine, one of the U.S. states with relatively infrequent referendums.

Of course, correlation does not necessarily mean causation. Often the causal effect of referendums on public policy is mainly indirect. How exactly referendum provisions work is not entirely clear, but one could speculate that elected representatives try to preempt the wrath of voters by passing legislation that seems to align with their perceived preferences. As voters' demand equality and better public health, politicians in jurisdictions where they are likely to be held accountable via referendums may—more or less consciously—pass legislation in line with the views of a majority of the people. They may also refrain from passing legislation that runs counter to the view of the majority. This “gun behind the door” explanation might account for why governments in jurisdictions as different as Uruguay, Slovenia, and Italy all spend more than the OECD average on social security programs. The explanation is, conceivably, that these countries, notwithstanding their differences, also have provisions for citizen-initiated referendums. Politicians do not like to be defeated. Hence, they have an incentive *not* to enact legislation that is likely to be undone by the vot-

ers in referendums. This indirect effect is far from neat, of course. But the same is true for medical or scientific explanations. The world of public policy—like that of biology—is convoluted, and the effects of political institutions are too multifarious to be subjected solely to statistical correlations and mathematical formulae.

It is also likely that frequent referendums lead to higher levels of political understanding and a flourishing of political participation. Some writers have

Politicians do not like to be defeated. Hence, they have an incentive not to enact legislation that is likely to be undone by the voters in referendums.

found that the Swiss are more informed about EU matters than voters in EU member nations, and evidence from the United States shows referendums increasing the

general level of participation and generating a higher turnout in elections.³⁵ The voters in Switzerland were able to correctly identify European Union institutions and had a greater awareness of EU policies than citizens in countries that did not hold referendums. This is, of course, despite the fact that Switzerland is not a member of the EU.³⁶ The same tendency has been observed in the United States, where each additional referendum on the ballot in a midterm election year increases turnout by an average of 1.2 percent.³⁷

But these benefits come at what some might consider to be a high price. Evidence shows that countries with more referendums also have lower levels of trust in politicians.³⁸ Some might see the latter as a problem; it need not be. Distrust is not simply an indication of malaise, but also a sign that the voters have a sound dose of skepticism. Or, as the German constitutionalist Dorf Sternberger once put it, “A certain degree of moderate dissatisfaction serves to benefit the state.”³⁹ This may be the reason why these states need such frequent referendums—to regularly check the authority of their leaders.

CONCLUSION

The referendum has received an abundance of bad press, most of it undeserved. Contrary to the views of many pundits, referendums have exhibited more positive effects than negative ones—both in countries where the citizens themselves can initiate votes, and in nations where constitutional amendments must be approved by the voters. While one might point to the negatives of a heated debate and the polarization that accompany political campaigns, the benefit of direct

democracy is that it keeps politicians on their toes. Like the market economy that encourages competition, which in turn benefits all, so too does democracy. As the economist John Matsusaka observed, the referendum “puts pressure on the ‘suppliers’ of laws to adopt policies favored by the voters.”⁴⁰

The referendum is a catalyst rather than a cause of policy improvements. It is not that more equality and better healthcare are directly achieved by referendums, but rather that the presence of this institution seems to prompt elected politicians to introduce measures that are in the best interests of the majority.

Opponents of referendums often hail the sagacious role of elected politicians who carefully deliberate in assemblies. Yet they forget that these same representatives are also more likely to succumb to special interest groups, engage in pork-barreling, and be driven by narrow, party-oriented political goals rather than by a concern for what is in the nation’s best interest. Those who criticize referendums because of the Brexit vote perhaps forget that the decision to hold a referendum originated in strategic party considerations and was ultimately an attempt to bring together the fractured Conservative Party, which was split on the issue. Critics may correctly object to the use of referendums as a tactical device, but such referendums constitute only a small fraction of the total number of referendums. Over 90 percent of referendums are either citizen-initiated or held as a result of constitutional requirements, adding a component of direct democracy as a check to a representative democratic system.

67

Still, the effects of each referendum also depend on predisposed views, which, in turn, reflect the prevailing, period-specific social morals, mores, and attitudes. In recent years, some U.S. states have seen examples of votes in favor of higher taxes to pay for public services. The opposite was true in the 1970s. The referendum is not liberal or conservative in itself. It is merely an institution, a democratic device, which—for better or worse—directly translates the unmediated preferences of the majority into legislation. It tends to be a corrective tool, a way of indicating to elected politicians that they have taken one step too far.

Those who reject the referendum on the grounds that it facilitates mob-rule and ill-considered reactions by voters who have been subjected to deceptive rhetoric might be attacking the wrong target. Maybe, to paraphrase the German playwright Bertolt Brecht, they should choose a new people rather than new institutions. 

NOTES

1. Friedrich A. von Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (London: Routledge, 1960), 22.
2. Marsilius of Padua, *The Defender of the Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 80.

3. Hélène Landemore, "Collective Wisdom: Old and New," in *Collective Wisdom: Principles and Mechanisms*, ed. Hélène Landemore and Jon Elster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 1–20; James Surowiecki, *The Wisdom of Crowds* (London: Anchor, 2005).
4. E. L. Lascher Jr., M. G. Hagen, and S. A. Rochlin, "Gun behind the door? Ballot initiatives, state policies and public opinion," *The Journal of Politics* 58, no. 3 (1996): 760–75.
5. David Aaronovitch, "Referendums are great... if you're a dictator," *Times*, October 19, 2017.
6. José Manuel Barroso cited in Frank Furedi, "To say or imply that the public is too stupid to grasp the high-minded and sophisticated ideals of the advocates of the EU is to express a profound sense of contempt towards ordinary people," *New Statesman*, June 13, 2005, <https://www.newstatesman.com/node/162241>.
7. Plato, *The Republic*, translated with notes and an interpretive essay by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968), Book IV, 488.
8. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings 1921–1926* (New York: International Publishers, 1978), 50.
9. Adolf Hitler in Erster Teil, *Reichsgesetzblatt* (Reichkanzlei, Berlin: 1934), 751–52, author's translation.
10. A. J. Zurcher, "The Hitler Referenda," *The American Political Science Review* 29, no. 1 (1935): 91–99.
11. Frank Omland, "Germany Totally National Socialist – National Socialist Reichstag Elections and Plebiscites 1933–1938," in *Voting for Hitler and Stalin: Elections under 20th Century Dictatorships*, ed. R. Jessen and H. Richter (Frankfurt: Campus, 2011), 254–75.
12. Erlander quoted in Leif Lewin, *Ideology and Strategy: A Century of Swedish Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 235.
13. Aaronovitch, "Referendums are great... if you're a dictator."
14. Ezra Y. Siff, *Why the Senate Slept: The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and the Beginning of America's Vietnam War* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1999).
15. D. Butler, A. Adonis, and T. Travers, *Failure in British Government: The Politics of the Poll Tax* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).
16. E.B. White, "The Meaning of Democracy," *The New Yorker*, July 3, 1943.
17. Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*, trans. and ed. J.E.C. Weldon (London: Macmillan, 1905), 129.
18. S. Brock Blomberg, Gregory D. Hess, and Akila Weerapana, "The impact of voter initiatives on economic activity," *European Journal of Political Economy* 20, no. 1 (2004): 207–26.
19. Lars P. Feld, Justina A.V. Fischer, and Gebhardt Kirchgässner, "The Effect of Direct Democracy on Income Distribution: Evidence of Switzerland," *Economic Inquiry* 48, no. 4 (2010): 817–40.
20. E. R. Gerber and A. Lupia, "Campaign Competition and Policy Responsiveness in Direct Legislation Elections," *Political Behavior* 17 (1995): 287–306.
21. David Magleby, *Direct Legislation: Voting on Ballot Propositions in the United States* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 43.
22. Lars P. Feld and Marcel R. Savioz, "Direct democracy matters for economic performance: an empirical investigation," *Kyklos* 50, no. 4 (1997): 507–38.
23. David Butler and A. Ranney, "Summing Up," in *Referendums: A Study of Practice and Theory*, ed. D. Butler and A. Ranney (Washington, DC: The American Enterprise Institute, 1978), 221.
24. Feld, "The Effect of Direct Democracy," 31.
25. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (London, Penguin: 2003), 19.
26. L.A. Times cited in Thomas Cronin, *Direct Legislation: The Politics of Initiative Referendums and Recalls* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 52.
27. J. G. Matsusaka, *For the Many or the Few: How the Initiative Process Changes American Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
28. Feld and Savioz, "Direct democracy matters for economic performance," 507–38.
29. David S. Broder, *Democracy Derailed: Initiative Campaigns and the Power of Money* (New York: Harcourt, 2000), 47.
30. L. P. Feld and J. G. Matsusaka, "Budget Referendums and Government Spending: Evidence from Swiss Cantons," *Journal of Public Economics* 87, no. 4 (2003): 2703–24.
31. Todd Donovan, "North America and the Caribbean," in *Referendums Around the World*, ed. M.

Qvortrup (London: Palgrave, 2017), 154.

32. Matt Qvortrup, "Demystifying Direct Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 3 (2017): 141–52.

33. These correlations are based on data for policy outcomes from United Nations Development Program (UNDP) 1990–2015. The calculations are Pearson's Coefficients. The figures can be found in Matt Qvortrup, "Western Europe," in *Referendums Around the World*, ed. M. Qvortrup (London: Palgrave, 2017), 39. These findings have a margin of error of 1 percent.

34. Qvortrup, "Western Europe," 39. Margin of error plus/minus 5 percent.

35. Matthias Benz and Alois Stutzer, "Are voters better informed when they have a larger say in politics? Evidence for the European Union and Switzerland," *Public Choice* 119, no. 1-2 (2004): 31–59.

36. *Ibid.*, 31–51.

37. Dan Smith and Caroline Tolbert, *Educated by Initiative: The Effect of Direct Democracy on Citizens and Political Organisations* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2004), 50.

38. S. Voigt and L. Blume, "Does Direct Democracy make for better citizens? A cautionary warning based on cross-country research," *Constitutional Political Economy* 26 (2015): 391–420.

39. Dolf Sternberger, "Verfassungspatriotismus," in Dolf Sternberger, *Schriften*, trans. Matt Qvortrup (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1992), 16.

40. J. G. Matsusaka, *For the Many or the Few*, 143.