



**Jean Monnet  
Centre of Excellence**

ADAM MICKIEWICZ UNIVERSITY, POZNAŃ

EU external actions in the contested global order –  
(in)coherence, (dis)continuity, resilience

# Direct democracy in the European Union and the EU's neighbouring countries

Prof. Magdalena Musiał-Karg

[magdalena.musial-karg@amu.edu.pl](mailto:magdalena.musial-karg@amu.edu.pl)

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# I. Introduction. Theory

## 1. Terms:

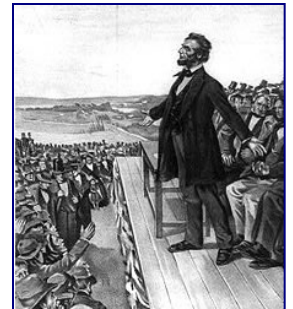
- a) democracy
- b) representative democracy
- c) direct democracy

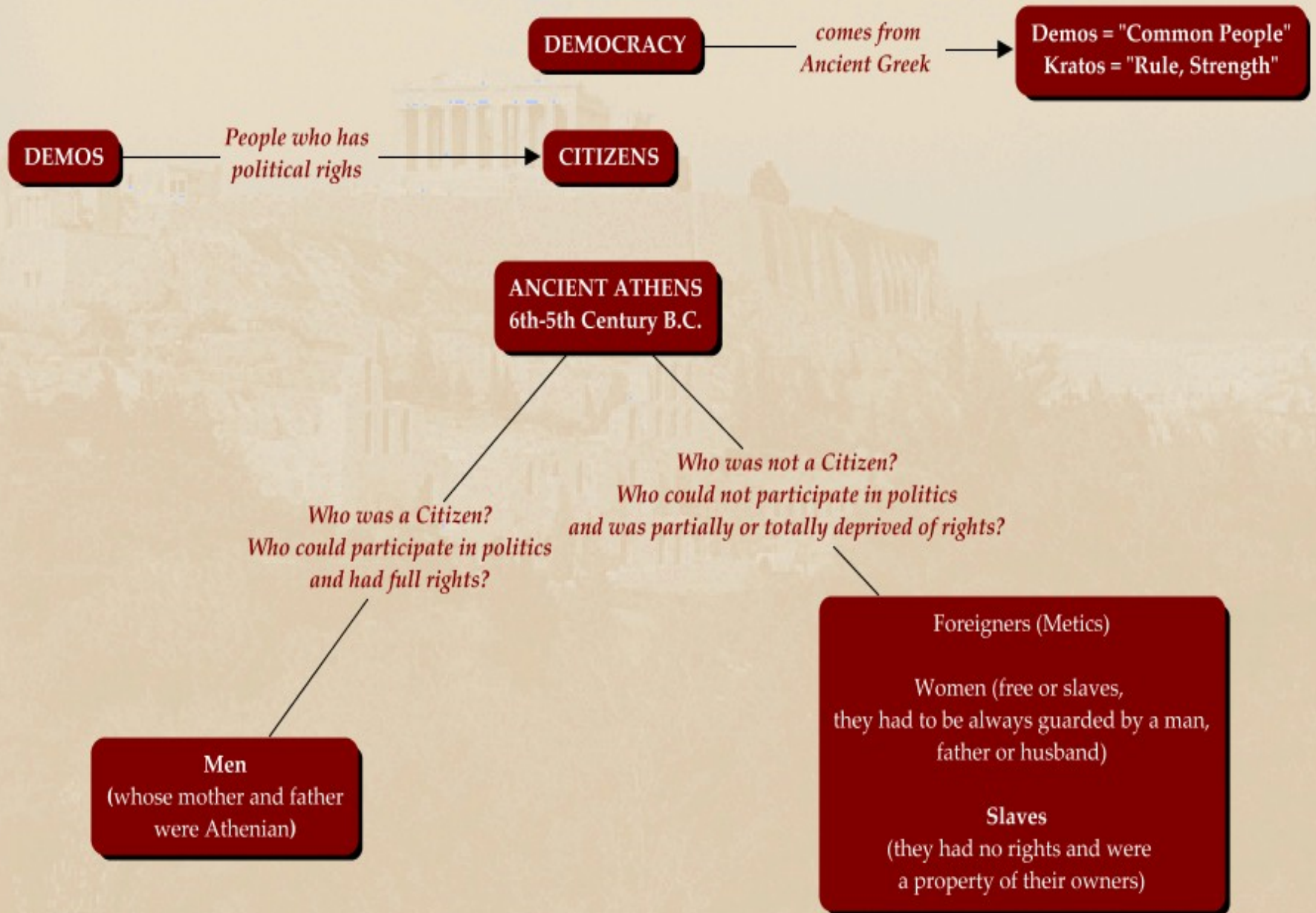
**Democracy is a one of the forms of government.**

**Democracy** – „*government of the people, by the people, for the people*”

A. Lincoln

**Democracy** - (literally "rule by the people", from the Greek *demos*, "people," and *kratos*, "rule") is a form of government.





# Athenian Democracy

## Greek city-state:

- Small communities,
- direct participation
- Women & slaves excluded
- Low participation
- Domination by demagogues & factions as/ more likely than 'deliberation'; instability
- assemblies, officials elected by lottery



# Other types of government derived from Greek base:

- *Aristocracy*: Rule by the best
- *Monarchy*: Rule by one person
- *Oligarchy*: Rule by the wealthy
- *Timocracy*: Rule by the honorable
- *Tyranny*: Rule *by* the rulers, *for* the rulers

**Often *democracy* is defined opposite to other types of ruling:**

- *Monarchy* - Government by a single ruler
- *Aristocracy* - Government by noblemen
- *Oligarchy* - Government by few persons
- *Theocracy* - Government by God
- *Dictatorship* - Government by people, that have seized power by force

# Democracy - Modern Definition

- Form of government, where a constitution guarantees basic personal and political rights, fair and free elections, and independent courts of law.

Is democracy a "perfect form of government"?

*«No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time»*

# Sartori's forms of democracy

**Representative democracy** – people elect their representatives and enable them to make decisions

**Electoral (procedural) democracy** – the role of people is to elect a government or any indirect body, which will elect an executive organ at national level.

**Direct democracy** – is a democracy without the representatives (relatively small groups which are easily observable)

**Democracy by referendums** – people make decisions in a direct way - not during a popular assembly but by the means of referendum (form of direct democracy)



# Democratic Rule

- For “The People” to rule we need:
  - Equality
    - *how do we define that?*
  - Freedom
    - *how do we define that?*
  - Engagement
    - *what type? and how?*

# Questions of Democracy

Who are “The People?”



# Questions of Democracy

How do “the people” rule?



# 2 types of democracy

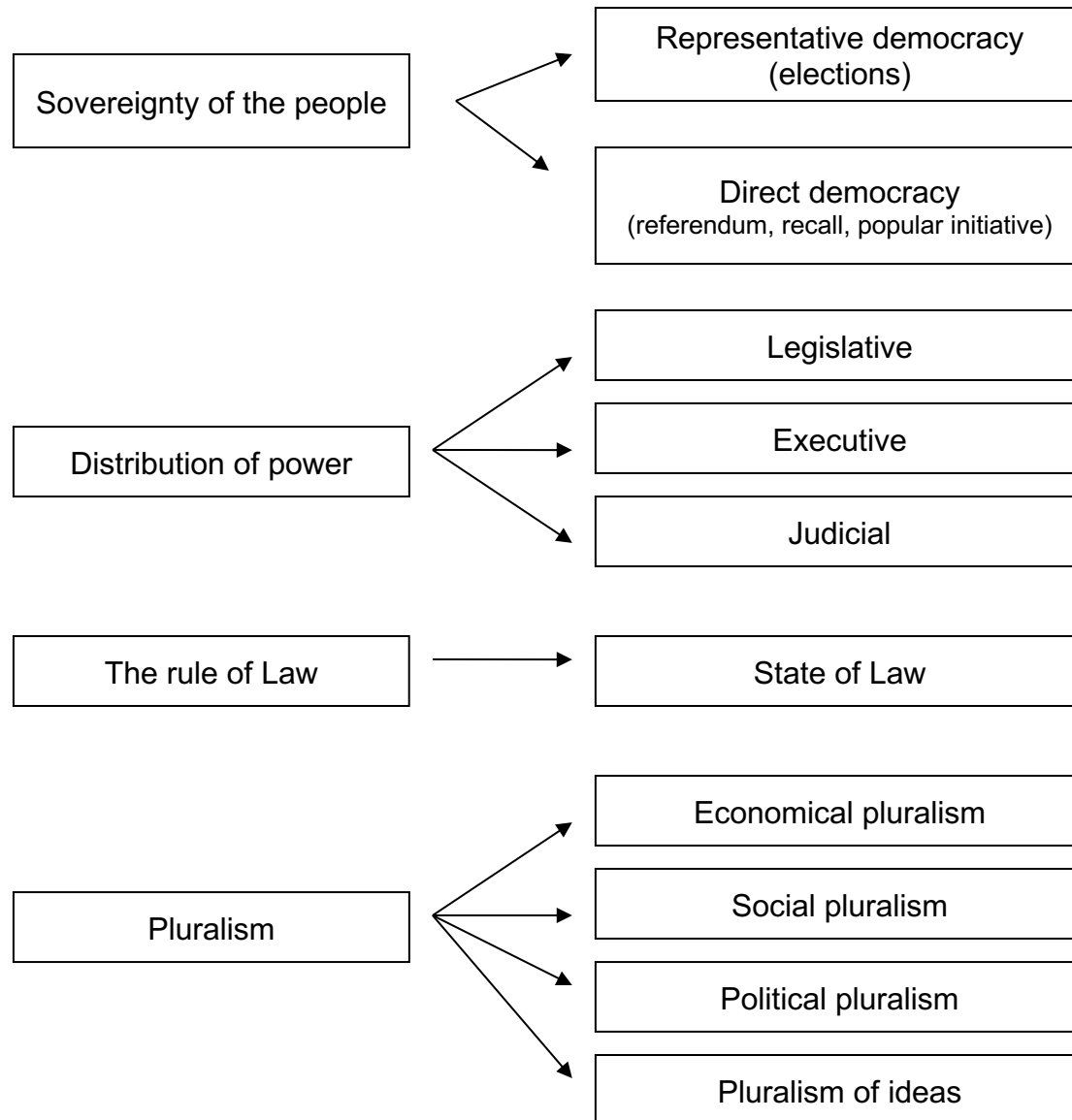
## a) **Representative democracy**

- a form of government founded on the exercise of popular sovereignty by the people's representatives. The representatives act in the people's interest.

## b) **Direct Democracy**

- set of procedures giving to all citizens right to make decisions by voting  
- the *right* of citizens to hold referendums on *any issue*

# Principles of democracy



# I. Introduction. Theory

## Instruments of direct democracy



### plebiscite

- a direct vote in which an entire electorate is asked to accept or reject a particular proposal referring to territorial issues

### recall

- is a procedure by which voters can remove an elected official from office

### popular initiative

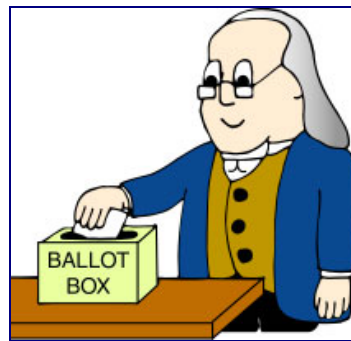
- provides a means by which a petition signed by a certain minimum\number of registered voters can force a public vote on a proposed issue

### popular assembly

- is one of the oldest and simplest forms of DD employed in some cantons of Switzerland. Eligible citizens meet on a certain day in the open air to decide on laws and expenditures by the council.

# Referendum - definition

- an institution that allows the electorate to approve or reject a proposal. Voters take part in a voting, and they make a choice between the available alternatives (usually “Yes” or “No”) on the ballot paper
- a low-governmental institution whose concept is that the citizens with the political rights are entitled to express their opinions in voting on the constitution, bills and other most important problems of political life



# Types of referendum

- **compulsory** (has to be organized to decide in certain issue)
- **facultative** (can be initiated at the will of a public authority or at the will of the citizens)

- **decisive** (when people's opinion resolves the issue definitely)
- **advisory** (result of voting is not decisive. The matter is given to another body for the final decision)

- **constitutionally pre-regulated**
- **non-pre-regulated**

- **controlled by the government** (Parliament or president decides about organizing referendum, its subject and proposals put under the vote)
- **required by law** (constitution requires certain decision to be approved by the electors )
- **initiated by the society** (that ratification of the governmental decisions by the society depends on the group of voters)



- **Positive sides of DD**
- **Negative sides of DD**

# Arguments on direct democracy

## DD instruments can:

1. influence on greater integration of the society
2. lead to a stabilization of the political system by heightening popular control, and giving a public a veto function
3. expand the role of citizens in the political arena
4. increase the legitimacy of political events and processes
5. solve conflicts between party elites
6. The most controversial and difficult issues are submitted to the people
7. show that representative democracy instruments may be less capable of dealing with difficult political problems and that referendums
8. may be considered a stronger than representative democracy tools source of political legitimacy on controversial issues
9. DD insures the common needs and primary interest of all of the citizens, protected by its constitution

# **Negative sides of DD**

- 1. it reduces all decisions to simple “Yes” or “No” answer**
- 2. high costs connected, for example, with the process of organizing referendum and conduction the referendum campaign**
- 3. citizens fail to understand the complex issues**
- 4. citizens have little interest in participating**
- 5. citizens are easy to manipulate**
- 6. citizens are prone to decide emotionally**
- 7. there are to many referenda confusing the voters**
- 8. political leadership is impossible**
- 9. referendums are inadequate for major issues**
- 10. referenda hinder progress**
- 11. referenda destroy civil rights**
- 12. referenda are expensive**

# Discussion

**Is direct form of democracy good in order to make national decisions?**

**What is the main negative aspect (disadvantage) of DD and referendums?**

**What is the main positive aspect (advantage) of DD and referendums?**

**Are required minimum levels of turnout effective to make decisions by the means of referendum?**

# NEXT PART of this MODULE

- DD in Switzerland