

Chapter 2

Beyond the Happy Consensus about Democratic Elitism¹

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The theory of democratic elitism can be regarded as a felicitous combination of Joseph Schumpeter's 'competitive theory of democracy' and Carl Friedrich's 'rule of anticipated reactions' (1963, 199-215). It combines Schumpeter's method of leadership selection through competitions for votes with Friedrich's principle that leaders anticipate voters' reactions to policies and adjust them accordingly, thereby providing a feedback mechanism between governments and voters. In these respects, democratic elitism is clearly distinguishable from participatory concepts of democracy.

During most of the twentieth century's second half, democratic elitism formed an important part of mainstream political theory, although it was challenged sharply by 'anti-elitists' such as Peter Bachrach (1967) and Carole Pateman (1970) and, less pointedly, by a renewal of the liberal theory of representative democracy in the works of Hannah Pitkin (1967) and John Plamenatz (1973). Replying pugnaciously to the anti-elitists while not quarrelling greatly with the liberal theorists, Giovanni Sartori (1987) defended democratic elitism and reinforced its location in the mainstream. But after political radicalism in Western democracies ebbed and communist regimes in Eastern Europe fell, new challenges to democratic elitism emerged in the guise of deliberative democracy, feminist theory, and identity politics.

A further challenge to democratic elitism has emerged recently, this time not from normative theorists, but from more empirically oriented scholars. This recent challenge does not yet constitute a single discourse, and it exists in a scattered literature. Its exponents focus on agency rather than structure, assigning to political leaders a much larger role in the functioning of today's democracies than democratic elitism supposes. For example, Daniello Zolo (1992) worries that growing social complexity is undermining the neo-classical paradigm of pluralist democracy, so that the distinction between democratic elitism and an untrammelled elitism is vanishing, and Emilio Santoro (1993) interprets Schumpeter's theory in a way that supports Zolo's concern. Bernard Manin (1997), after reviewing the history of democratic representation, has described today's representative governments as 'audience democracies,' in which personalities, rather than parties and party programs, play the pivotal role in electoral competitions. On the basis of extensive empirical research, James D. Fearon (1999) has likewise concluded that democratic elections are now much more about selecting "good types" of candidates than about judging office holders' performances and policy positions taken by opponents. Adopting a rational choice approach and also marshalling evidence, José María Maravall (1999) buttresses the familiar observation that in electoral democracies incumbents are less accountable and responsive to voters' wishes than democratic elitism teaches. Margaret Canovan (1999) has portrayed populist appeal and charismatic leadership not as a pathology, but, rather, as an inescapable feature of representative democracy. Yves Mény, Yves Surel (2002) and their co-authors investigate the sources of populism and highlight the trend toward a personalization of power in today's

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democracies. Jean Blondel (2005) discusses how this increasing personalization of power skews the interplay of political parties in contemporary European democracies, while Thomas Poguntke and Paul Webb (2005) sketch the ‘presidentialization’ of these democracies. András Köröseyi (2005) re-works the concept of ‘leader democracy’ that Max Weber employed to capture the essence of plebiscitary democracy, while John Higley and Jan Pakulski (2007) speculate that “Caesarist” leaders are becoming conspicuous in today’s democracies. Finally, Mark Philp (2007) breaks with much contemporary moral philosophy to stress the importance of agency and leadership in contemporary democracies.

These recent works challenge the happy consensus about democratic elitism and are the backdrop for this chapter, in which I have three aims. First, I want to challenge the view that democratic elitism is a coherent theory. I will argue that it papers over three distinct models of representation and democratic control: the mandate, accountability, and authorization models. Second, I want to uncover and analyze the sources of these divergent models. I will show that different assumptions about the rationality, knowledge, and competence of citizens and leaders explain much of the models’ differences. Third, I would like to discuss whether the authoritarian or “Caesarist” leanings of the authorization model justify the *futility thesis* of classical elitism (Femia 2001).

My argument will be organized into four sections. In the first three sections I will discuss the mandate, the accountability and the authorization models. I will begin by describing the models as found in the works of Robert Dahl, John Plamenatz, and Adam Przeworski, respectively. Then I would like to highlight the assumptions that underlie and shape the models and discuss how the models differ in depicting the distribution of control between political elites and voters in liberal democracies. Finally I will situate Friedrich’s feedback mechanism of anticipated reactions in the models. In the fourth section I would like to explore some implications of the findings for democratic elitism and to give some conclusive remarks.

The mandate model

In the mandate model of representation, most clearly presented in Robert A. Dahl’s work, especially his classic book about *Polyarchy*, elections enforce a government’s responsiveness to the will of the people. Dahl holds that “the key characteristic of a democracy is the continuing responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, who are considered as political equals” (1971, 1-2). Dahl and Charles Lindblom acknowledged the possibility that leaders can play relatively autonomous roles in polyarchy and large-scale democracy (1953, 415-9), but in his normative theory of democracy, Dahl (1989) ignores leaders’ autonomy. He assumes that voters have clear preferences about issues and that leaders’ preferences are not their own but are, instead, policy positions they adopt in electoral contests in response to voters’ preferences (Dahl 1956; 1989). Voters’ choices of candidates amount to indirect choices of policy options, and voters make these choices in two ways. First, they use a *sampling technique* to choose a candidate from whom responsiveness to their policy preference(s) can be expected. When sampling candidates, voters concentrate on their personal characteristics. They authorize the candidates they select to represent and implement their policy preferences. But this seemingly rational behaviour of voters, which is analogous to the descriptive concept of democratic representation (Pitkin 1967), is based on voters’ dubious belief that there is a direct link between candidates’ personalities and policy positions. The second method that Dahl thinks voters use when choosing their representatives

manifests Friedrich's law of anticipated reactions directly. The fear among leaders that voters will switch their support to opponents makes leaders strongly responsive to voters. For Dahl, in sum, political leadership does not amount to more than office-holders and candidates responding to voters' preferences. Put differently, leadership is the *re*-presentation of voters' issue preferences in various decision-making situations. Leaders are agents under strict control of principals (i.e., voters); they are delegates rather than autonomous actors. Dahl explicitly rejects Schumpeter's argument that political competition guarantees a choice among leaders but not among policies (Dahl and Lindblom 1953, 283). Dahl's normative and theoretical reference point is the populist or mandate model of democracy.

Now let me turn to the underlying assumptions of this model. Classical democratic doctrine in general and the mandate model in particular assume that citizens are equally well-informed and competent in public policy matters. This assumption is necessary because only competent and autonomous citizens can create a preference order when considering policy alternatives. In effect, the assumption makes the model applicable to party democracy, wherein the competition of office-seeking politicians supposedly provides valuable information to citizens that enhances their ability to judge policies. To subject the model to empirical research, Przeworski and his colleagues (1999) have created a set of measurable benchmarks. These stipulate that the mandate model is realized when the following conditions obtain: (1) citizens are well-informed, and electoral campaigns are informative as regards the policies candidates for office would follow if elected; (2) incumbent responsiveness prevails between elections in accordance with Friedrich's rule; (3) the mandate given to winning candidates and policy platforms in elections is always in the public's best interests; (4) subsequent to elections, voters retain the policy preferences they express at the time they voted; (5) the interests of politicians coincide with those of voters.

It is not hard to see that these conditions are seldom if ever realized, however. They lack empirical validity and logical coherence as well. First, although candidates and parties try to inform citizens about their policy positions on some issues, they just as often misinform or deceive citizens about other ones, when they do not simply remain silent about particularly thorny issues. In elections for the European Parliament, for example, issues about further European integration are usually kept off campaign agendas, but there are similar examples from national legislative elections as well. As shown by much work by rational choice and social choice theorists, parties routinely try to manipulate policy agendas according to their strategic interests (Riker 1982; Riker 1983; Shepsle-Bonchek 1997). Hence, the assumption that there are well-informed citizens at the time of elections is dubious at best.

Second, although parties usually try to implement their electoral programs when in office, they are far from trustworthy in this respect. Although a party's reputation for such trustworthiness can be an important electoral asset that its leaders usually try to preserve (thereby observing Friedrich's rule), there are numerous rational considerations that may motivate them to break campaign promises. By invoking unexpected circumstances, empty treasuries, and the like, politicians often explain that disregarding their promises to voters is unavoidable and not at all their fault. Such explanations become more difficult when elected office holders take actions that fly directly in the face of what they earlier promised – when they do exactly what they said they would not do. Examples of such U-turns are legion and they indicate that Friedrich's rule hardly operates always and everywhere (Stokes 1999; Stokes 2001).

Third, implementing policies promised to voters is not always in voters' best interests. The wishes of an electoral majority may conflict with the common good, especially when short- versus long-run interests are considered. Thus, voters may be delighted by the benefits they receive from some welfare policy's immediate implementation, but these may come at the cost of growing budget deficits and public indebtedness. It is quite possible that even an outright policy reversal may serve the public interest better than adhering to a policy that was promised and immediately implemented following an election. The U-turn of the Socialist-led coalition in France in 1983, when the Mitterrand government abandoned its policy of nationalizing core industries, is a good example.

Fourth, the assumption that between elections voters retain the policy preferences they expressed when they voted is doubtful. It is obvious that public opinion about concrete issues often changes sharply between elections. Fifth and finally, the assumed coincidence of interests between politicians and voters has been disputed throughout the history of political analysis. Politicians' self-interest is often in conflict with the public interest. We know from the results of contemporary empirical research and of rational choice theory that politicians are always able to shirk or seek "rents"² (Manin et al. 1999).

It is apparent, then, that the conditions assumed by the mandate model are difficult, bordering on the impossible, to meet in reality. As Manin and his associates conclude, "[O]n one hand, incumbents may adhere to their promises even if their implementation is not the best for citizens, and, on the other hand, they may deviate from the promises in the best interest of the public" (1999, 16). Voters are, in reality, much less informed than the mandate view assumes. Even Anthony Downs' well-known thesis of rational voter ignorance undermines the mandate model. For that matter, rational politicians do not necessarily have an interest in increasing citizens' knowledge about policies, and may, in fact, have a distinct interest in misinforming them. This asymmetry in the information possessed by politicians and voters is reinforced by a "competence asymmetry" because there is little doubt that technical competence in governing separates politicians from voters. These asymmetries mean that political leaders and elites have substantial leeway for manipulating policy agendas and, accordingly, citizens' policy preferences.

The accountability model

John Plamenatz charts a path between Dahl and Schumpeter. Leery of the unbounded mandate that Schumpeter assigned leaders once they are elected, Plamenatz also criticizes the mandate model's depiction of leaders as strictly responsive to voters and their policy preferences. Democracy, Plamenatz contends, is much more government by consent of the governed than it is government that expresses their will (1973, 108). In a democracy leaders speak for the people, but this does not mean that leaders merely express people's wishes. Rather, they express aims, beliefs, and feelings voters may not be conscious of until a trusted leader articulates them (1973, 87). It is this responsibility of leaders – to express and pursue more or less unconscious wants and desires of voters – that distinguishes Plamenatz's accountability model from Dahl's mandate model. Voters' choices among leaders are not rational actions in a utilitarian sense; rather, they are *reasonable* efforts to make leaders responsible for their actions. Whereas Schumpeter thought that leaders manufacture 'the people's will,' Plamenatz holds that the selection of office-holders through competitive

² When politicians want something whose pursuit is injurious to citizens, the rational choice terminology refers to this something as "rents" (Manin et al 1999, 40).

elections does not by itself provide responsible leadership. If leaders are to be accountable politically to the people, voters "...must understand the significance of what they are doing. (...) They must have some knowledge of how the candidates soliciting their votes differ from one another" (1973, 189). When citizens vote, they must understand the significance of their choice. In this way, Plamenatz revitalizes the concept of accountable and responsible leadership, developed originally by Burke and J.S. Mill in their treatments of liberal representation and parliamentarism. In Plamenatz's account, which fits well into the wider context of the accountability model of representation explored by Hannah Pitkin (1967, 55-59), elections make leaders accountable for their actions. The details of this model will be unfolded below.

The accountability model is built on the concept of a free rather than a strictly bounded mandate of the kind that Dahl stipulates. Elected representatives are *trustees* who enjoy substantial autonomy for their actions. Elections are a method of leadership selection, as Schumpeter taught, but voters have the opportunity to render *ex post* judgments on what leaders do. Thus Friedrich's law specifies a *feedback* role for democratic elections by which leaders or a ruling elite is controlled by the people. More formally, although there is an asymmetry between principal and agent (since agents are the active and the principal is the *reactive party*), electoral feedback produces some mutuality in the principal-agent relation (P ⇔ A). Friedrich's rule facilitates, in short, accountable elite rule.

The accountability model turned out to be a dominant interpretation of the (feedback) mechanism of representative government. In contrast to the mandate view, it is based on more realistic assumptions about the knowledge and competence of citizens and about the contingent nature of the political and policy decision-making process. It assumes that citizens are too ignorant or disinterested to have *ex ante* preferences in most policy issues and that this undermines both the possibility and desirability of representative government in its classical sense. However, the accountability model assumes that voters are able to give an *ex post* judgement of a government's record and can in this way hold their rulers accountable. Thus Manin and his colleagues observe that, "[E]ven if citizens are unable to control governments by obliging them to follow mandates, citizens may be able to do so if they can induce the incumbents to anticipate that they will have to render accounts for their past actions. Governments are 'accountable' if voters can discern whether governments are acting in their interest and sanction them appropriately" (1999, 40).

The accountability model assumes the following conditions: firstly, citizens set some standard of performance or *re-election criteria* for evaluating governments (e.g. clean streets, safety, an increase in real income); secondly, the government, wanting to be re-elected and anticipating the citizens' evaluation, does what it can to satisfy these criteria (Przeworski 1999; Manin et al 1999, 41). But as Manin and his colleagues note, although voters can decide whether to re-elect incumbents on any basis they want and are in this respect sovereign, "[A]ccountability is not sufficient to induce representation when voters have incomplete information" (1999, 44). The conditions assumed by the accountability model can be further disaggregated as follows: (1) voters are informed about the political state of affairs in a *weak sense*; (2) this state of affairs is attributed to incumbent office holders; (3) Friedrich's rule operates; (4) the *re-election criteria* that voters employ are always in their best interest. As regards citizens' knowledge and competence, although they can be rather ignorant about policy details on the input side of policy making, they must be fairly well informed about the output side, especially about how policies have affected the economic situation and their own well-being. But this weaker information requirement is sufficient for the voters' retrospective

judgement of a government's record only where the economic or other state of affairs is directly attributable to the incumbent office holders. This is, however, a completely unfounded assumption since the state of an economy or other complex of policies depends largely on exogenous factors that are beyond a government's control. It follows that voters must be well informed not only about the general welfare and their own well being but also able to distinguish between exogenous factors and a government's contribution to the overall situation. Short of this technical competence, voters cannot judge a government's record correctly.³ So, although the accountability model sets up less demanding conditions regarding citizen knowledge and competence, and although the Friedrich feedback rule seems applicable, these weaker conditions are still quite demanding in the real world of politics. Citizens' uncertainty or inability to set apt criteria for evaluating government performance *post hoc* opens the way to various manipulations by leaders and elites (Riker 1982; Riker 1983; Manin et al. 1999; Maravall 1999).

The authorization model

In contrast to Dahl and Plamenatz, Adam Przeworski (1999) accepts Schumpeter's argument that political competitions offer voters choices among leaders but not among policies. In Przeworski's minimalist conception of democracy elections are mostly negative in the sense that they enable voters to get rid of those who govern without blood being shed. But due to politicians' interests and voters' lack of information, elections cannot ensure representative governments that act in the best interests of the people (1999, 31-32). Przeworski asserts that Schumpeter's account of democracy, as simply a method of leadership selection, is not only empirically accurate but has normative merits. First, it provides a peaceful method for resolving conflicts and changing leaders. The alternations in office holding brought about by elections may well induce political moderation because today's office holders know that they may be tomorrow's opposition, and vice versa, so it is the common interest of incumbents and opponents to act with restraint (1999, 45-46). Second, voting has the important consequence of authorizing 'compulsion'. The principle of majority rule amounts to authorizing coercive actions according to a counting of heads and sheer numbers so that conflicts are decided without resort to violence. In this respect, voting helps to legitimate democracy (1999, 48-49). Przeworski's minimalist conception of democracy is in concord with the wider concept of the authorization view of representation, explored by Pitkin (1967, 38-54).

In contrast to the two other views of democracy discussed above, the authorization model provides a more sceptical account of elections. In this account, elections do not necessarily constitute a feedback mechanism (Przeworski 1999; Pitkin 1967). In this reading of Schumpeter's democratic elitism, the heteronomy and incompetence of ordinary citizens make holding elected representatives accountable for their actions difficult if not impossible. Accountability is at most a *metaphor*. Democratic control is limited to the selection of leaders, in the course of which *consent* is given by citizens to leaders. Voters decide to consent to the leadership of particular persons (with particular images and traits) but they do not take autonomous initiatives or make autonomous choices. In this approach, the possibility that incumbents might lose the next election does not, at least not reliably, make them accountable in the way that Friedrich's rule holds. The contingent nature of political situations, the

³ E.g. if they set the re-election criteria "too low", they may re-elect incumbents with a poor record, if they set the re-election criteria "too high" they may pull the government down even if the government represented the public interest fairly well (Manin et al 1999, 40-44).

importance of exogenous factors, plus sheer social complexity eliminate or at least seriously limit feedback between political decision-makers and those affected by their decisions (A => P). The images, charisma, populist appeals, and achievements of incumbents and challengers do affect citizens' electoral choices, but elections matter primarily because, as Przeworski's minimalist concept of democracy holds, they facilitate political moderation and stability.

Let us now see the more realistic assumptions of the authorization model. It presumes the following: (1) voters are *badly informed* about policy matters and causes of the recent and current political state of affairs; (2) due to the complexity of the modern world, as well as the unpredictability of human agency, this state of affairs cannot be attributed *directly* to incumbents; (3) Friedrich's rule is only a metaphor; voters usually reward the *personal performance or image* of office holders rather than their policy record; (4) the public interest is also a metaphor or a "thin" concept.

The authorization model depicts a very different world than those assumed by the mandate and accountability models. The mandate model's world is rational and predictable; the accountability model's world is also quite predictable or, at least, not capricious; it is only exogenous factors that make accountability imperfect. By contrast, the authorization model faces the challenge of an unpredictable and volatile political world. It embodies Weber's semi-tragic view of political action: "[I]ntentions often have a perverse relation to outcomes in politics" (Philp 2007, 81). Complexity and unpredictability *under-determine* causality in the world of politics so much that the well being of citizens and the political state of affairs cannot be attributed in any direct way to what incumbents have done. This does not mean that voters choose randomly among candidates for office; they simply choose differently from what the mandate and accountability models assume.

Citizens are badly informed about policies and causes of the political state of affairs; they are, in effect, disoriented by the political world's complexity. Political leaders and elites make this world intelligible for them. In election campaigns and following elections, leaders and elites are authorized to do the following: (1) interpret political reality and make it comprehensible to ordinary citizens; (2) define the public interest; (3) carry out collective actions, including the coercion of citizens to obey them. Aware, at least subliminally, of this, voters reward the *personal performance* of leaders and elites rather than their adherence to a previous mandate or their general policy record. Personal performance is always judged situationally. The *ex ante* and *ex post* evaluative standards that are assumed, respectively, by the mandate and accountability models are absent. Voters' choices occur in a frame of reference that is conceptualized and presented by leaders and elites.

Leaders and elites are motivated to shape or manipulate this frame of reference. But their actions are neither a manipulation of something objectively given, nor a distortion of objective reality. They are the product of political actions that have different aims and that are usually incompatible. Thus the political situation that voters must contemplate is not only contingent as the result of exogenous factors; it is inherently contingent because it results from the *endogenous* structure of political actions by leaders and elites. It is a situation requiring subjective deliberation and contemplating political potentialities. It involves, at least in part, taking into account what political leaders would apparently like to see happen (Körösiényi 2005, 373-374).

From this standpoint, the notion of a common good or a public interest is at most a metaphor. Voters must make electoral choices according to more or less ad hoc

considerations. They will tend to associate the public interest with successful leaders in circumstances where success depends in large measure on fortune and virtue. There is a ceaseless political struggle to interpret and re-interpret the political situation and to thereby define and re-define the public interest. If both incumbents and voters are aware of the rather shaky connection between a government's policy decisions and the political state of affairs in which voters find themselves when going to the ballot box, then Friedrich's rule is again not more than a metaphor. Voters have no clear or definite clue about whether incumbents should be re-elected or thrown to the wolves. This makes manipulating and shaping voters' preferences a rational political strategy for incumbents in order to increase their chances of re-election. Voters' choices depend more on the impact of the strategic interplay of rival political leaders and parties, which is to say on agenda-setting, framing, and priming political issues than forming judgements according to independent yardsticks.

Implications for Democratic Elitism and Conclusions

We can see that there is a wide gap between complete elite control and complete realization of the people's will, as the contrast between the authorization and the mandate models demonstrates. Citizens vote on candidates and leaders gain political ascendancy in all three models, yet the models produce views of democracy that are very different analytically and normatively. But what implications can we draw from the foregoing discussion for democratic elitism? I will summarize my conclusions in five points.

Firstly, democratic elitism is an *umbrella concept* in which political leaders and elites are elected to public offices, but institutions of electoral democracy and Friedrich's rule ensure that the will of the people nevertheless prevails. But closer analysis revealed that this is an illusion. We realized that under the surface of the happy consensus of democratic elitism there are, in fact, three disparate models of democratic representation and governance (table 1.).

Secondly, political leaders and the political elite have very different roles in the three models. In the mandate model elected leaders enjoy the trust of voters and form merely a *functional elite*. In the accountability model Friedrich's feedback mechanism has a central role because voters evaluate the past actions of elected leaders and to this extent form a *responsible elite*. The authorization model focuses much less on what elected leaders have done and much more on their and their opponents' charisma, popular appeal, and so on. Friedrich's feedback mechanism prevails only as a metaphor, and there is an *autonomous power elite*.

Thirdly, in spite of the same institutional set up, i.e., contested and free elections, the relevance of Friedrich's law and the nature of representation are different in each model. In the mandate model it enforces *responsive* public policy, in the accountability model it establishes *responsible* government, while in the authorization model it limits democratic control to the *selection* of leaders.

Fourthly, the differences between these models turn largely on epistemological and anthropological assumptions about the capacities of voters. We could see that the differences in these assumptions are quite large. The extent to which voters are able to influence public policy and control incumbents depends on (1) voters' competence and the extent to which they are well informed about policy matters, candidates' and parties' electoral manifestos, and

the records of office holders seeking re-election; (2) the extent to which contingencies and exogenous factors are beyond government control; (3) the extent to which political leaders engage in agenda and issue manipulations; (4) the quality of electoral campaigns mounted by competing office seekers. The more realist or pessimistic assumptions about citizens' political competence we have, the farther from the mandate, and the closer to the authorization model of representation we get.

Finally, let me turn exclusively to the authorization model. In this last part I will focus on the authorization model for two reasons. Firstly, it is rather neglected in the literature. Secondly, it is the most pessimistic model; therefore, from a normative point of view, it provides the most difficult case. It is apparent, that the relationship between the authorization model and democratic elitism is not safe from a strong ambiguity. Moreover, it can be argued, that the authorization model has a "Caesarist" leaning (Baehr-Richter 2004).

I would like to consider three questions about the authorization model and its implications for democratic elitism: (1) the relationship between leadership and manipulation; (2) the vanishing accountability of leaders; (3) the personalization of politics in democracies.

Pitkin (1967, 233) writes that, "[T]he line between leadership and manipulation is a tenuous one, and may be difficult to draw. But there undoubtedly *is* a difference, and this difference makes leadership compatible with representation while manipulation is not". Pitkin's dictum fits the accountability model well because it presumes, first, that there is an asymmetric but still two-way or mutual relationship between leaders and citizens, and second, that citizens do have objective or at least independent criteria for evaluating a government's record. The model assumes, in other words, the independence of public opinion. By contrast, the authorization model abandons the latter assumption about public opinion so that the line between leadership and manipulation is not only vague, as Pitkin would have it, but vanishing. Manipulation does not mean that a single political authority "manufactures" citizens' preferences, but rather that a competitive struggle among rival political leaders shapes citizens' views and mobilizes them for competing ends.

If electoral competitions and rivalries are not the domain of rationally comprehensible policy positions and programs, but are the domain of manipulation or of performance images and leaders' personal dynamisms, then Friedrich's rule does not obtain. Competitive elections do not provide a guarantee against elite domination, and they may simply conceal elite rule that is maintained through various means of *heresthetics* and manipulation (Riker 1983; Maravall 1999; Jacobs-Shapiro 2000). In contrast to an optimistic reading of Schumpeter's competitive theory of democracy, David Miller (1983) and Emilio Santoro (1993, 129-131) have shown that *oligopolistic competition* enhances neither the responsiveness nor the responsibility of leaders.⁴ The personal performances of leaders which often involve staged presentations or other theatrics, are evaluated by voters who constitute Manin's "audience" in a democracy. But can *performances* be regarded as criteria for holding leaders accountable? Are leaders as actors on the political stage still accountable? A theatre actor's performance can be applauded or jeered off the stage. We can call this accountability only in a very limited or metaphorical sense.

⁴ Beside the Friedrich's rule Emilio Santoro (1993, 127) adds a further criteria to have the positive impact of democratic elections, namely, that there should be no collusion among parties. But in reality, he notes, collusion often happens: "parties can always agree not to compete on certain issues".

What choice is left to citizens in this personalized view of democratic control, where accountability is limited and manipulation is an inherent part of leadership? Are there further considerations that make elections superior to lotteries or to elite guardianship, and that go beyond the peace-inducing effects of Przeworski's minimalist conception of democracy? I would like to make two additional points to support the argument that candidate selection in a personalistic mode makes sense and provides citizens with a meaningful choice.

My first point concerns the competence of citizens. Choices according to leaders' personal characteristics are often regarded as irrational. But at one point even Dahl and Lindblom admitted that "[T]o take personal characteristics heavily into account in voting is ... not so irrational as it seems" (1953, 71). At that stage in their thinking about democracy, they accepted that voters are not informed enough to satisfy the mandate model of representation. They tried to bridge the gap between the ignorance of voters and the knowledge necessary for issuing a mandate through the "*sampling method*" in which voters' choices, based on candidates' personal characteristics (see first section), serves as a substitute for issue voting in the circumstances of incomplete information. We can generalize this sampling idea by stating that voters' choices based on candidates' personal characteristics and images are more congruent with the knowledge and competence of ordinary citizens, as assumed by the authorization model, than issue voting or voting according to specific re-election-criteria. Judging candidates' images, personality traits and/or dynamisms is closer to ordinary citizens everyday *practical knowledge* than is the evaluation of complex policy actions and government records (cf. Schumpeter 1987, 258-261).

My other point pertains to the process of candidate selection. Offering empirical evidence, James Fearon notes that "[A] group of people might understand elections as means of selecting or conferring honor on the best or most distinguished person" (1999, 57). Sartori (1987) and Manin (1997, 149) emphasize the meritocratic aspect of elections. They argue that elections, in contrast to lotteries, are *aristocratic* means of leadership selection: they select the best candidates vis-à-vis the averages as representatives. As Manin puts it, "[V]oters, if they are to elect a candidate, must regard him as superior in the light of the quality ... that they consider *politically relevant*" (1997, 146).

The conclusion from both arguments is, that even within the conditions on which the authorization model rests – where there is no expectation of accountability – voters' choices based on personal characteristics of candidates make sense.

I conclude that the authorization model of representation, the most pessimistic of all three, is compatible with a sceptical reading of Schumpeter's competitive theory of democracy. Although in this more realistic and sceptical version of democratic elitism political leadership that eschews manipulation while being substantially accountable to citizens is mostly a myth, it still lies well short of the classical elitists' view that democracy is nothing more than an exercise in futility.

Table 1. The mandate, accountability, and authorization model compared.

	MANDATE MODEL	ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL	AUTHORIZATION MODEL
Principal-Agent relation	Principal => Agent	P < = > A (impact in both directions)	Agent => Principal
Public holders	Office- delegates	Trustees	Representatives
Type of the mandate	Bounded mandate	Free mandate, (and accountability)	Free mandate (accountability is a metaphor)
Democracy means	Self-rule of the people	Popular control of the rulers	consent to rulers
Voters' choice	On policy-issues (<i>Input mandate</i>)	On incumbents record (<i>Ex post judgement on output</i>)	On candidates (<i>Selecting good type</i>)
The meaning of the Friedrich's rule	Mandate responsiveness	Output accountability	Evaluation of theatrics or staging
Type of Elite	Functional elite	Responsible elite	Ruling elite
Citizens	Rational and completely informed / competent	Reasonable and fairly informed / competent	Non-rational and badly informed, incompetent
Assumptions on the word	Rational, predictable	Reasonable, predictable to a certain extent	Capricious / irrational

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