

## The Rise of Majority Rule in Early Modern Britain and Its Empire

This expansive history of the origins of majority rule in modern representative government charts the emergence of majority voting as a global standard for decision-making in popular assemblies. Majority votes had, of course, been held prior to 1642, but not since antiquity had they been held with any frequency by a popular assembly with responsibility for the fate of a nation. The crucial moment in the global triumph of majority rule was its embrace by the elected assemblies of early modern Britain and its empire. William J. Bulman analyzes its sudden appearance in the English House of Commons and its adoption by the elected assemblies of Britain's Atlantic colonies in the age of the English, Glorious, and American Revolutions. These events made it overwhelmingly likely that the United Kingdom, the United States, and their former dependencies would become and remain fundamentally majoritarian polities. Providing an insightful commentary on the state of democratic governance today, this study sheds light on the nature, promise, and perils of majority rule.

WILLIAM J. BULMAN is Associate Professor of History and Global Studies in the Department of History at Lehigh University. His articles on the intellectual, religious, political, and cultural history of England and its empire have appeared in *Past and Present*, *Historical Journal*, and *The Journal of British Studies*. His previous publications include *Anglican Enlightenment* (2015) and, as co-editor with Robert G. Ingram, *God in the Enlightenment* (2016).

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William J. Bulman



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*To my parents*

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## Note on the Text

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In quotations, orthography has usually been modernized. Dates are rendered in Old Style, with the year beginning on 1 January. The footnotes contain short title and author or editor references. Full references appear in the Bibliography, where the titles of early modern printed books have often been abbreviated. In references to the journal of the English House of Commons, the journal of the English House of Lords, *Proceedings in Parliament 1624*, Townshend's *Historical Collections*, and Anchitell Grey's *Debates*, dates have been listed (in the format "month/day/year") instead of page numbers, in order to facilitate location in both digital and print versions of these sources. In references to Sir Simonds D'Ewes' Long Parliament diary, a reference to the original manuscripts (British Library MSS Harley 164-6) is normally followed by a parenthetical reference to page numbers in a nearly complete transcript (Yale University Archives MS 1987).

## Abbreviations

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<i>Aston</i>	Maltby (ed.), <i>Short Parliament Diary</i>
BL	British Library, London
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
<i>Burton</i>	Rutt (ed.), <i>Diary of Thomas Burton</i>
CD 1629	Notestein and Relf (eds.), <i>Commons Debates for 1629</i>
CJ	House of Commons, <i>Journals</i>
<i>Dering</i>	Henning (ed.), <i>Parliamentary Diary of Sir Edward Dering</i>
<i>D'Ewes</i>	Coates (ed.), <i>Journal of Sir Simonds D'Ewes</i>
D'Ewes	British Library MSS Harley 164–6, Yale University
MS	Archives MS 1987
Grey	Grey, <i>Debates of the House of Commons</i>
<i>Harington</i>	Steig (ed.), <i>Diary of John Harington</i>
LJ	House of Lords, <i>Journals</i>
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives, London
<i>Milward</i>	Robbins, (ed.), <i>Diary of John Milward</i>
NA	National Archives, Kew
<i>PJLP</i>	Coates et al. (eds.), <i>Private Journals of the Long Parliament</i>
<i>POSLP</i>	Jansson (ed.), <i>Proceedings in the Opening Session of the Long Parliament</i>
<i>PP 1610</i>	Foster (ed.), <i>Proceedings in Parliament 1610</i>
<i>PP 1614</i>	Jansson (ed.), <i>Proceedings in Parliament 1614</i>
<i>PP 1624</i>	Baker (ed.), <i>Proceedings in Parliament 1624</i>
<i>PP 1625</i>	Jansson and Bidwell (eds.), <i>Proceedings in Parliament 1625</i>
<i>PP 1626</i>	Bidwell and Jansson (eds.), <i>Proceedings in Parliament 1626</i>
<i>PP 1628</i>	Johnson et al. (eds.), <i>Proceedings in Parliament 1628</i>
<i>PSP</i>	Cope and Coates (eds.), <i>Proceedings of the Short Parliament of 1640</i>
<i>Verney</i>	Bruce (ed.), <i>Verney Papers</i>