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Democratic representation in an internationalized and globalized world

Debates in recent decades have announced the end of parliamentarism and declared a post-parliamentarist period due to the challenges of a globalized political order. The challenges for national parliaments in modern democracies are twofold.

On the one hand national parliamentarians lost competencies to international organizations with increasing powers such as the European Union. On the other hand the representatives are faced with more intricate policy problems due to a more complex society e.g. legislation on genetically modified mechanisms.

It has been criticized that parliamentarians lack specialization and expertise to adequately represent differentiated interests. Instead, neo-corporatist and private actors are asked to find policy solutions; however, these actors lack democratic legitimacy.

I will discuss the implications of this development for the everyday decision-making process in parliaments using the Swiss and other European parliaments as example. Firstly, I discuss why complex, ethical discussions are often decided without party discipline with so-called free votes. This will be followed with an analysis about the voting process on complex issues and the factors which can explain these decisions.