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ACADEMIC PROGRAMME - Panels: 42 (View) - Papers: 6 (view)**Section:** OPEN SECTION**Panel:** [The decline of democracy: Loss of quality, hybridisation, and breakdown](#)**Paper:** [Unanticipated Consequences of a Popularly Supported Decision –](#)**Author(s)**Herlin Chien hchien@faculty.nsysu.edu.tw *National Sun Yat-sen University***Abstract**

Have you wondered 'is a popularly supported decision in a democracy necessarily a benign one, meaning the impact of the decision on the democratic institution is positive'? The legitimacy of most decisions in a democracy derives from people's popular support. Yet, is it possible that the erosion of democracy can find its cause in the undeniable of overwhelming legitimacy that overlooks inherent problematics in certain democratic decisions. This article is to demonstrate one of the interesting scenarios where majority of people endow a political decision with their support that appears to provide revolutionary promises yet produce unanticipated negative consequences to the democratic institution as a whole – French dual executive ruling. This case is interesting for such backsliding in democratic quality did not occur in a nascent democracy but in one of the world's oldest democratic institutions. What went wrong then? The paper argues that people are myopic and easy to buy into the politics of promise presented in the beautifully crafted rhetoric of politicians whose only goal is to secure his or her power in the short term, not to the engineering of a sustainable democratic institution. In the case of French dual executive ruling (1986-88; 1993-1995; 1997-2002) or executive power sharing between ruling and opposition leaders, three particular given promises can be summarized – promise to create consensus, promise to end party politics and promise to reform. Those promises did not completely go in vein but the three corresponding unanticipated consequences they created include further party polarization, indifference in project and ineffectiveness in reform. By sharing these observations, this paper tries to invite readers to reflect upon questions on the rise and decline of democracies, both new and old.

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