Box-Checking: How can the Democratic System be Improved?

Democracy, and particularly American democracy, has long been called [“The Great Experiment”](https://archive.org/stream/ourgreatexperime00beckuoft/ourgreatexperime00beckuoft_djvu.txt) for the gamble that was taken in creating it. It was believed that democracy could never function on a large scale, and that any attempt to do so would end in failure. Yet, the experiment continued, and as can be seen it very much succeeded. The thing about experiments, however, is that they sometimes need adjustments. Just as one needs to change the amount of water in their beaker, democracy is an evolving system that requires change and improvement. Perhaps the most important way it can be improved is in the realm of voting, and the methods by which it is done. Such an improvement will be imagined in a direct, multi-party election. Then, considering such a scenario, how can the current method of operation be improved upon, and how can democracy be made better for everyone? As it stands, voting can be best improved by a move away from single choice and into ranked choice, and in doing so a better democracy can be made.

Currently, the vast majority of elections are done under a [first-past-the-post system](https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/voting-systems/types-of-voting-system/first-past-the-post/), which is very much the simplest of all voting methods. It is that the candidate with the most votes is the winner. It may seem to be a fine system, but delve deeper and there are grave issues to be seen. Chief among these problems is the spoiler effect, by which similar candidates take votes from each other and allow a third, less liked candidate to take a plurality. Nowhere is this issue better exemplified than in the [French election of 2002,](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/apr/22/thefarright.france) in which the multitude of left-wing candidates all took votes from their frontrunner, causing the widely-disliked far-right candidate Jean-Marie Le Pen to defeat all of them and move on to the second round of voting, where he was crushed in a two-person race. In addition, FPTP inevitably causes the creation of a two-party system and hurts the potential influence of new, third parties. It makes people afraid to vote for the candidate they want most, for fear of accidentally spoiling the candidate that they may not want, but who is far better than the other candidate. In the United States, a third party can receive federal election funding if they [either raise $5,000 from 20 states or reach 5% of the popular vote in the general election.](https://web.archive.org/web/20060222110433/http://www.cfinst.org/pr/111005.html) These are nearly impossible to do, because FPTP dooms third parties to failure, and people don’t want to donate to or vote for failures. The reason that this happens is that FPTP demands that people choose the single candidate that they want the most. This is an issue that [Single Transferable Vote](https://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/voting-systems/types-of-voting-system/single-transferable-vote/) attempts to solve. STV asks voters to rank the candidates from most desirable to least desirable. If no candidate is a majority’s first choice, then the last place candidate is removed from the running and all the voters that had them has their first preference have their vote move on to their second preference. This continues until a candidate reaches an absolute majority. This system allows people to vote for third parties without fear of hurting the candidate they would otherwise vote for, and in doing so solves the spoiler effect that so infected FPTP.

Supporters of FPTP mostly make arguments that aren’t related to FPTP’s effect on democracy, but rather on logistics. Most are willing to admit it is not the best system when it comes to choosing a winner, but they claim that other advantages outweigh that. [First, it is a simple system, and people won’t require to be taught how to use it. Second, it is cost-effective and quick, as ballots are easily counted and a meticulous level of math is not required.](https://www.uk-engage.org/2013/06/what-are-the-advantages-and-disadvantages-of-using-the-first-past-the-post-voting-system-2/) These are certainly benefits to a country, if not to a democracy. After the 2018 midterms, the Arizona Senate election took upwards of a week to finalize the results. Under an alternative system, that time could potentially be greatly increased. An unorthodox view for some supporters of FPTP is the idea that the system’s informal suppression of third parties is a benefit. They claim that the inability of third parties to win leads to them entering the larger parties, which gives them more ideological diversity and prevents radicalism.

Democracy is a sacred thing, which must be built upon in every way possible, and it is hoped that supporters of FPTP agree. Even if they do, they are going about it the wrong way. While things like cost and time are certainly issues with STV, they come with an improved democratic system. Money and time aren’t just being wasted and thrown away, they’re being put towards making something better. Even if the Arizona election took until New Years to determine a winner, at least one could say that everybody got their vote in and that the process was completely fair. Having a country’s main parties forced away from radicalism could be a benefit, or it could not be, depending on how extreme one’s own views are. That’s not the issue, however. Forcing so many different viewpoints into so few parties is a definite recipe for disaster. It would lead to disorganization and fracturing that would leave the party unable to compete. Such an example can be seen in the [Reform Party](https://www.infoplease.com/reform-school). When it had a unified platform in 1996, it did well for itself in the presidential election. Yet, from then on, it largely consisted of anyone dissatisfied with the status quo, and infighting in the [2000 primaries](https://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/26/us/2000-campaign-reform-party-reform-party-embroiled-over-buchanan-domination-its.html?mtrref=www.google.com&gwh=2D4A45EF20F5A542B71CF1F8351C03FA&gwt=pay) effectively destroyed the party’s ability to compete. Putting such an unwieldy coalition on the scale of a major party would create a massive implosion. As former member Donald Trump said, “So the Reform Party now includes a Klansman—Mr. Duke, a Neo-Nazi—Mr. Buchanan, and a Communist—Ms. Fulani. This is not company I wish to keep.” Seeing all these facts, it is clear that STV and FPTP both have issues and benefits to them, but that free, pluralist democracy which is held so dear to most Americans is best aided by a switch to the former.

The point of STV is not to make things more complicated, nor is it a revolutionary idea. It has been adopted in some capacity by Ireland, Malta, and Australia, and it works well. What STV is about is creating a better country by striking at its policies’ origin: voting. Through STV a nation more reflective of its constituent’s desires can be created. There may be some who don’t want to make the switch not out of some sort of loyalty to another voting system, but out of apathy. The people who go, “Politics is already so broken, surely it cannot be fixed.” Though there is certainly irony in quoting Vladimir Putin when speaking of democracy, he did give the perfect saying for these circumstances. He said, “Things will probably never be okay. But we have to try for it.” There may be no enthusiasm in one’s desire for reform, and they may not even want to expend the effort to work for it. But the very least that can be done is to try, and it is only in trying that a nation, a democracy, and a people can become the very best form of themselves.

Editorial Analysis

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“[Count the number of women running for president. And get used to it.](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/count-the-number-of-women-running-for-president-and-get-used-to-it/2019/02/10/a241db78-2cab-11e9-984d-9b8fba003e81_story.html?utm_term=.04afa50e813f)”

[Who’s the Next Trump Cabinet Member to Go? The Smart Money Is on Interior’s Ryan Zinke](https://www.thedailybeast.com/whos-the-next-trump-cabinet-member-to-go-the-smart-money-is-on-interiors-ryan-zinke?ref=author?ref=author)

The first stylistic choice taken from the articles was the use of a rhetorical question near the beginning of the passage. It helps best to transition from the exposition of the opener to the answering of the question and the prompt. The next choice was the type of rhetoric to base the argument on. Both articles did use facts, yes, but like my own they were largely based on ethos and pathos more than anything. Ethos due to referring to people who have experienced what is being written on, and pathos because the two articles are largely conjectural based on how the author feels the future will turn out. My argument uses ethos for the same reason, but uses pathos for the sake of evoking a civic spirit in the reader. The third similarity between the writings is the type of evidence provided for the logos. Statistics as evidence is uncommon in these writing, with previous events being drawn upon as evidence instead. Stats do not work well for my argument, for example, because that would likely mean comparing the US to a country with STV, which has too many variables to work well. Instead, the use of prior events to predict the best course of action is how all three arguments are delivered. This is used three times over, in regard to the Reform Party, the Arizona Senate election, and the French election of 2002.