The USA is only proto-democratic. More than a third of US voters have taxation without representation

A buddy-system of scholars from the humanities and proper scientists may clear up their confusions

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> The following version updates a bit to 2024, and provides an excel sheet for EPR in the USA using single member districts and List Voting.

European countries with Equal Proportional Representation (EPR) like Germany, Holland and Sweden have proper democracy with proper elections. The USA with Single Member District Representation (SMDR) and First Past the Post (FPP) provides a stark contrast with EPR. US political scientists use the term "election" for what is actually a contest. Compare the medieval "trial by combat" that used the term "trial" but only for a precursor to the law. US political scientists rely upon ordinary language instead of using definitions with scientific precision – and thus they do no real science.

In EPR most seats are backed by the electoral threshold. Voters have taxes with representation, like the Boston Tea Party of 1773 demanded. People are already registered at City Hall so that they are already registered as voters. These countries have welfare states, national health care, broad schooling, and such. These countries are not perfect but at least they have a functioning democracy. The Dutch system of List Voting can be tweaked a little so that it would also allow for EPR in the USA and the 435 seats in a true House of Representatives. [2]

In the actual House of Representatives only a few seats pass the electoral threshold. Most "representatives" appropriate the votes of those who did *not* vote for them – see the graphs below. More than a third of US voters pay taxes without representation. In the US, the Boston Tea Party slogan is only a relic of history. The House should rather be called a "House of Vote Thieves". Thomas Ferguson's "Golden Rule" of 1995 analysed the process as money-driven, so that votes are alike being bought. While social media nowadays would offer more scope for real democracy like in EPR, we see ever more money directed at voter manipulation.

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[1] https://thomascool.eu/Papers/SocialWelfare/2018-11-13-USA-Midterm.pdf
A version of that (with mutilated graphs) is at https://physicsandsocietyforum.wordpress.com/-2020/01/15/a-buddy-system-of-physicists-and-political-scientists/.
[2] https://boycottholland.wordpress.com/2024/10/07/confusion-in-the-usa-continued/ with excel sheet at https://thomascool.eu/Papers/SocialWelfare/2024-10-06-US-House-example-Equal-Proportional-Representation.xlsx This still has single member districts but imposes EPR.

While American culture is drenched in notions of competition, this stops at the voting booth. Observe that there is more competition when new entry is easy. EPR has a low level of entry for new political parties, for it suffices to attain the electoral threshold. SMDR/FPP instead tends to block entry. It is not just that a change of the US system is blocked by parties that got their power because of this system. The main problem is the blindness to the proper analysis.

US "political science" has got stuck in proto-scientific concepts. Researchers tend to regard voting itself as sufficient for democracy, as if eating itself would be sufficient for health. US academic integrity is fundamentally corrupted when scholars claim to be scientific without being aware what science really entails. With wizards waving their magic wands, the public remains oblivious of reality too. A book like "*A different democracy*" by Taylor et al. (2014) depicts the US as American exceptionalism, instead of concluding that it is only proto-democratic. The book "*Votes from seats*" (i.e. the reverse) by Shugart and Taagepera (2017) can be recognised as a scientific breakthrough, but they still tend to treat votes from EPR and SMDR as equivalent, with a deficient analysis on democracy proper. Below discussion will provide evidence for this diagnosis that "political science on electoral systems" is no science.

Discovery in August 2017

Before August 2017 I thought that the properties of DR and EPR were well-known, and that the main reason why the USA, UK or France did not change from DR to EPR was that a party in power would not easily change the system that put it into power. Then however I discovered that the literature in the particular branch of "political science on electoral systems" (including referenda) did not discuss the properties with sufficient scientific clarity. Many statements by "political science on electoral systems" are still locked in the humanities and tradition, and they aren't scientific when you look at them closely. For its relevance for empirical reality this branch of political science can only be compared to astrology, alchemy or homeopathy. The proof is in paper 84482 in the Munich archive MPRA. Thus the academia have been disinforming the world for the greater part of the last century. Americans express a preference for their own political system but they are also indoctrinated in their obligatory highschool Government classes that are disinformed by the academia.

US House of Representatives 2018

In the contest for the US House of Representatives in 2018, 63.6% of the votes were for winning candidates and 36.4% were for losing candidates, see the barchart. This chart is novel and is conventionally not shown even though it is crucial to understand what is happening. The US system of single member district representation (SMDR) has "winner take all". The traditional view is that the losing votes are "wasted". Part of the new insight is that the latter terminology is distractive, too soft, and falsely puts the blame on the voter, who should be wiser than to waste his or her vote. In truth we must look at the system, and it is actually the system that discards these votes. These votes no longer count. These voters essentially have taxation without representation.
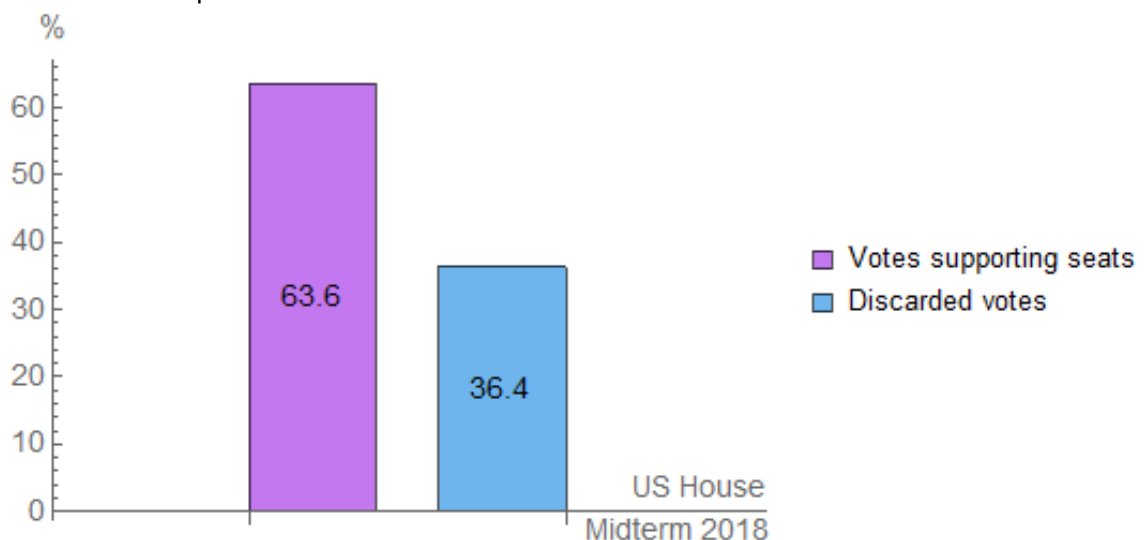
Legal tradition in the humanities versus empirical science

Economic theory has the Principal – Agent Theory (PAT). A losing voter as principal will hardly regard a winning candidate as his or her agent. The legal storyline is that winning candidates are supposed to represent their district and thus also those who did not vote for them, but empirical science and hardnosed political analysts know that this is make-believe with fairy tales in cloud cuckoo land. In practice those voters in a district deliberately did not vote for this winning candidate and most commonly will not regard this winner as their proper representative but perhaps even as an adversary. The Taylor et al. (2014) textbook refers to PAT but applies it wrongly as if formality suffices. Under the legal framing of "representation" these House winners actually appropriate the votes of those who did not vote for them.

These voting outcomes are also highly contaminated by the political dynamics of district representation (DR). While Holland with EPR allows for the dynamic competition by new parties, the USA concentrates on bickering between two parties, with internal strife and hostile takeovers in the primaries. Many voters only voted strategically in an effort to block what they considered a worse alternative, and originally had another first preference. In a system of equal proportional representation (EPR) like in Holland, there is electoral justice, and voters would be at ease in choosing their first preference and thus proper representatives. They might also employ some strategy but this would be in luxury by free will. In the USA voters fear that their vote is lost, and the outcome is also distorted by their gambling about the odds. Thus we can safely conclude that even more than a third of US voters in 2018 were robbed from their democratic right of electing their representative.

Legal tradition versus the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948 states: *"Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives."* This is *choice* and not a *contest.* When votes are not translated into chosen representation, then they are essentially discarded, in violation of this human right. The phrase "*district representation*" is a legalese coverup of this violation of free choice. The USA helped drafting and then ratified the UDHR but apparently did not realise that its own electoral system violates it. The USA has been saved a bit by the workings of the Median Voter Theorem in the period that this functioned, and by parties defending their voters in losing districts (which runs against the principle of representing your own district). The loss of welfare however must be great, e.g. compare Sweden and Holland (that switched from DR to EPR in 1907 resp. 1917) that are among the happiest countries.

Confirmation by a scatter plot

We see this diagnosis confirmed by the district results of 2018, see the scatter chart with horizontally the number of votes per winner and vertically the share of that winning vote in the district. Some districts are uncontested with 100% of the share. The key number is the *electoral threshold,* defined as the total number of votes divided by the 435 seats in the House. In 2018 this is about 246 thousand votes, given by a vertical dashed line.
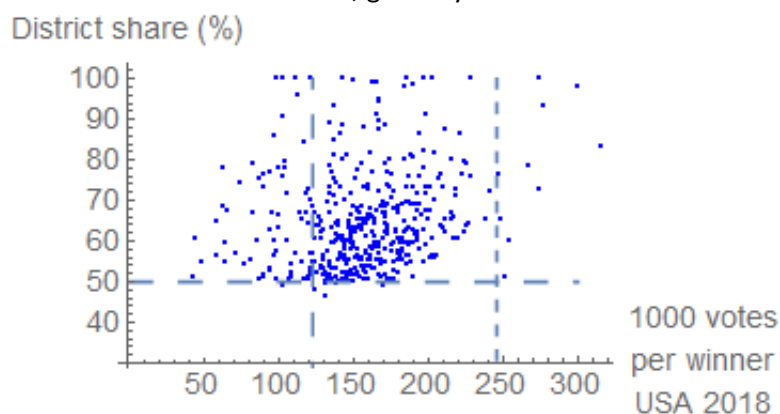
In equal proportional representation (EPR) a seat in the House would be fully covered by this electoral threshold, and practically all dots would lie on this line except for some remainder seats. In the USA in 2018 only some 11 dots manage to reach this threshold, helped by having large districts. Gerrymandering can help to create such districts. There can be more districts with fewer voters in which the gerrymandering party hopes to have an easier win, remarkably often with even less than half the electoral threshold at 123 thousand votes.

Another aspect in the graph is that the winners tend to gain more than 50% of the votes in their districts, which plays into the storyline that they gain a majority in their district, but this still is a distracting fairy tale because they fall brutally short of the electoral threshold for proper representation. While some people speak out against gerrymandering, it is the very point of having districts itself that disenfranchises voters.

Ordinary language instead of scientific precision

Above observation on taxation without representation could be an eye-opener for many. Perhaps two eyes may be opened. This unscientific branch of political science relies upon ordinary language instead of definitions with scientific precision. Physics also borrowed common words like "force" and "mass", yet it provided precise definitions, and gravity in Holland has the same meaning as gravity in the USA. The "political science on electoral systems" uses the same words "election" and "representative" but their meaning in Holland with EPR is entirely different from the USA with DR. We find that the USA, UK and France are locked into confusion by their vocabulary.

Blame also the unscientific cowardice of R.A. Dahl and C.E. Lindblom

Both eyes might be opened even further by a glance at the US presidency, that currently occupies the USA so much, and that creates such needless national division. Arthur M. Schlesinger, *"The Imperial Presidency"*, 1973, was concerned that the US presidency exceeded its constitutional boundaries and was getting uncontrollable. Robert A. Dahl & Charles E. Lindblom, *"Politics, Economics, and Welfare"*, 1976, page 349, take this into account and provide their answer:

> *"Given the consequences of bargaining just described, what are the prerequisites of increasing the capacity of Americans for rational social action through their national government? (...) Certainly the adoption of a parliamentary system along British lines, or some version of it, may be ruled out, not only because no one knows enough to predict how it would work in the United States, but also because support for the idea is nonexistent. Although incremental change provides better opportunity for rational calculation than comprehensive alternations like substitution of the British system, there is little evidence even of a desire for incremental change, at least in a direction that would increase opportunities for rational calculation and yet maintain or strengthen polyarchal controls."*

This is a statement of unscientific cowardice. A scientist who observes climate change provides model, data and conclusion. Dahl & Lindblom show themselves as being afraid of stepping out of the line of tradition in the humanities. They fear the reactions by their colleagues. They want to keep saying that the US is a democracy rather than conclude that it is only proto-democratic. They resort to word-magic and present "polyarchy" as a great insight rather than a cover-up for this (p276). The phrase about predicting how a parliamentarian system would work out in the USA is silly when the prediction and the experience elsewhere is that it would be an improvement. The US House of Vote Thieves can still appoint a prime minister, if the US president decides to adopt a ceremonial role, which is quite possible within the US constitution. For the checks and balances it would also be better that the president doesn't interfere with the election of the legislature, but we saw such meddling in 2018. See also Juan Linz, *"The perils of presidentialism"*, 1990. The reference to Britain partly fails because it also has DR while the step towards proper democracy includes the switch to EPR too.

In his obituary of Dahl, Ian Shapiro stated in 2014: "He might well have been the most important political scientist of the last century, and he was certainly one of its preeminent social scientists", but the truth rather is, obviously with all respect, that Dahl was still locked in the humanities and tradition, that he lacked the mathematical competence to debunk Kenneth Arrow's interpretation of his "Impossibility Theorem", and that Dahl's unscientific cowardice has contributed to leading "political science on electoral systems" astray, though all researchers remain individually responsible of course even today. Teorell et al. in 2016 e.g. follow Dahl's misguided analysis and their index puts the USA, UK and France above Holland, even while e.g. at least a third of US voters is being robbed from representation because of this US House of Vote Thieves.

A buddy-system of scientists and scholars from the humanities

If the world of political science would not answer to this criticism and burke it, then this would constitute a white collar crime. The US has a high degree of litigation that might turn this into a paradise for human rights lawyers. Yet in science we follow Leibniz and Tinbergen, and we sit down and look at the formulas and data. Empirical scientists in physics, biology etcetera tend to be interested in other things than democracy, and when they haven't studied the topic then they may have been indoctrinated in highschool like any other voter. Scholars interested in democracy apparently have inadequate training in empirics. The scholars have started since 1903 studying statistics and the distinction between causation and correlation, but a key feature of empirics is also observation, and when it still is tradition that dictates your frame of mind and what you see and understand, then you are still locked in the humanities, without the ability to actually observe what you intend to study. It is crucial to observe in DR that votes are discarded and are not used for representation of first preferences, unhinging the principal-agent relationship.

Also FairVote USA is part of the problem, who do not clearly present this analysis and who misrepresent EPR. They complicate the step towards EPR by proposing systems of Ranked Voting or Transferable Votes for multi-member districts. This generates More PR (MPR) rather than EPR. The methods will confuse voters and hinder the step to EPR (while List Voting suffices). An overview of the state of discussion is rather depressing. [3]

A first step is that real scientists check the evidence (at MPRA 84482), which would require that scientists develop an interest in the theory of democracy, and that scholars in "political science on electoral systems" overcome their potential incomprehension about this criticism on their performance. A good solution approach is to set up a buddy-system, so that pairs of scientists and scholars can assist each other in clearing up confusions. Some may fear what they might discover and have to explain to US voters, but as someone already said: there is nothing to fear but fear itself.

On the Fall 2023 discussion in Democracy (Journal)

The participants in this 2023 symposium tend to propose PR by means of multi-member districts and ranked methods. Bloch Rubin & Elinson (2023) rightly point to problems within EPR and implementation issues when the USA would make the change: *"But to the extent that ours has evolved to cope with the challenges of two-party duopoly, a switch to multiple parties and proportional representation may be more trouble than it's worth."* Such caution should not put the horse behind the cart. The logical order is that EPR would be given as a human right, and that the elected representatives must resolve the issue of governing.

On the Summer 2024 discussion in the Boston Review

The Summer 2024 edition of the Boston Review had a forum on "*The need for more parties*", with the opening article by Lee Drutman "*A path beyond our broken two-party system*".

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[3] https://www.npr.org/2023/11/18/1194448925/congress-proportional-representation-explainer

Overall, I tend to agree with Drutman (2024) in his evaluation of the responses that his article received from other authors. The amazement is that he does not opt for EPR as the imperative direct goal itself. It seems to me that he still is under the spell of American exceptionalism.

Drutman suggests that "fusion" (allowing candidates to be listed by more parties) would be the road in the US to break away from the current US situation. He suggests that parties might use this as an intermediate step towards EPR. This approach causes a discussion about the history and properties of fusion within the conditions of the US, and this distracts from adequately informing the US public that it has been lied to about democracy and EPR by the wizards of "political science". Within EPR there is no need for fusion. Drutman is at risk of arguing that the US needs districts to allow for fusion to work as a goal in itself. He also reasons within the framework of DR, as if this is the valid context, while the proper scientific conclusion is (see MPRA 84482) that DR itself is a broken concept for democracy itself. Obviously, when all representatives in EPR would live in Washington DC and would lose contact with voters across the country, then it would make sense to discuss the relevance of a local condition. However, the US already has those conditions. Those are dealt with in the provided example of List Voting, so that these are not crucial for a US switch to EPR.

In my analysis, the US public is better served with a discussion about EPR. Anything else distracts from the conceptual clarity about proper democracy. Whether there will be more than one party is up to the voters, and there is no need to argue for multi-member districts. The US two-party system was broken as a democracy from the start, namely proto-democratic. The US political culture in the 1950s and 1960s seems to have allowed the Median Voter Theorem to work – but this is no criterion in itself. Also in EPR there can be a problem that a majority party seems to be in power for too long. Much depends upon the respect by a coalition majority for minority rights. These however are issues within democracy itself, and should not be confused with the switch itself from proto-democracy to democracy.

NB. Shapiro (2024) in that discussion points out the countries with EPR do not necessarily fare better given economic stagflation since the end of the seventies. This however is an economic discussion, while countries with EPR at least do not suffer from proto-democracy. For a solution approach on the Great Stagflation see my book DRGTPE (2000, 2011).

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The data in the charts are from the Cook Political Report of November 12, with still 7 seats too close to call but presumed called here. I thank Stephen Wolfram for the programme *Mathematica* used here.

Evidence

(2018a), "One woman, one vote. Though not in the USA, UK and France", https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/84482/

Supplementary evidence on inequality / disproportionality of votes and seats

Political science on electoral systems uses measures of inequality or disproportionality (ID) of votes and seats, to provide a summary overview of the situation. Relevant measures are the sum of the absolute differences corrected for double counting, as proposed by Loosemore & Hanby (ALHID), the Euclidean distance proposed by Gallagher (EGID), and the sine as the opposite of R-squared, as proposed by me (SDID). For two parties, or when only one party gets a seat so that the others can be collected under the zero seat, then Euclid reduces to the absolute difference.

The following table gives the US data for 2016 and preliminary 2018. Conveniently we use data and indices in the [0, 10] range, like an inverted report card (Bart Simpson: the lower the better). The ALHID of 2016 gives a low value of 0.63 in a range of 10, but SDID provides a

magnifying glass and finds 3.24 on a scale of 10. In 2018 the inequality / disproportionality seems much reduced. Observe that the votes are not for first preferences due to strategic voting, and outcomes thus cannot be compared to those of countries with EPR.

$$\left(\text{USA[2016]} \rightarrow \left\{ \text{Table} \rightarrow \begin{array}{|l|l|l|l|} \hline \text{Parties} & \text{Votes} & \text{Seats} & \text{Differences} \\ \hline \text{Rep} & 4.91 & 5.54 & 0.63 \\ \text{Dem} & 4.8 & 4.46 & -0.34 \\ \text{Other} & 0.29 & 0. & -0.29 \\ \hline \end{array}, \text{ID} \rightarrow \begin{array}{l} \text{AbsLoosemoreHanbyID} \rightarrow 0.63 \\ \text{SineDiagonalID} \rightarrow 3.24 \end{array} \right\} \right.$$

$$\left. \text{USA[2018]} \rightarrow \left\{ \text{Table} \rightarrow \begin{array}{|l|l|l|l|} \hline \text{Parties} & \text{Votes} & \text{Seats} & \text{Differences} \\ \hline \text{Rep} & 4.58 & 4.67 & 0.09 \\ \text{Dem} & 5.24 & 5.33 & 0.09 \\ \text{Other} & 0.18 & 0. & -0.18 \\ \hline \end{array}, \text{ID} \rightarrow \begin{array}{l} \text{AbsLoosemoreHanbyID} \rightarrow 0.18 \\ \text{SineDiagonalID} \rightarrow 1.61 \end{array} \right\} \right)$$

Taylor et al. (2014:145) table 5.6 give electoral disproportionalities in houses of representatives in 31 democracies over 1990-2010, using EGID. Proportional Holland has 0.1 on a scale of 10 (there is little need to measure something that has been defined as equal proportional), and disproportional France has 1.95 on a scale of 10. The USA has 0.39 on a scale of 10. Taylor et al. p147 explain the much better performance of the USA compared to France by referring to the US two party system, including the impact of the US primaries. This statement is curious because it doesn't include the mentioning of strategic voting and thus the basic invalidity of the measure. In 2018 more than a third of the votes in the USA are discarded, so their table 5.6 does some number crunching but misses the key distinction between EPR and DR.

Taylor et al. may be thanked for their mentioning of the primaries, because this highlights that the USA labels of "Republican" and "Democrat" are only loosely defined. District candidates have different origins and flavours. A Southern Republican in 2018 may rather derive from the Southern parties who supported slavery and thus be less rooted in the original Republicans of Lincoln 1863 who abolished slavery. Thus, above aggregate measures are dubious on the use of these labels too. In the aggregate we see that district winners are supposed to defend losers of the same party in other districts, but this runs against the notion that a representative ought to represent the own district, and this objection is stronger when the party labels over districts are only defined loosely.

Thus it is better to use the ALHID = EGID and SDID measures per district, and then use the (weighted) average for the aggregate. In each district there is only one winner, which means that the disproportionality is large, and we see more impact from the phenomenon that losing votes are not translated into seats. When we weigh by seats, or the value 1 per district, then we get the plain average. Alternatively we can weigh by the votes per district. We find that the 2018 aggregate ALHID of 0.18 rises to the average 3.50 or 3.64 on a scale of 10. SDID uses a magnifying glass. These outcomes are still distorted by strategic voting, of course, but much better present the dismal representation in the USA.

$$\left(\begin{array}{l|ll} \text{All in the [0, 10] range} & \text{ALHID} & \text{SDID} \\ \hline \text{Using aggregate data only} & 0.18 & 1.61 \\ \text{Districts, weighted by seats} & 3.5 & 6.4 \\ \text{Districts, weighted by votes} & 3.64 & 6.57 \end{array} \right)$$

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