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Don't be fooled by Democrats taking House of Representatives, America's democracy is dying on the vine

[World \(/category/world\)](/category/world)

[C Christine Fair](https://www.firstpost.com/author/c-christine-fair) (https://www.firstpost.com/author/c-christine-fair)

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In America, democracy has never been but a dream deferred. The 'founding fathers' owned and raped those human beings they deemed subhuman because of their race; seized land from Native populations in what can only be described as genocide and believed that only white male landowners should vote.

America was literally founded upon white, Christian cis male supremacy. It has never atoned for its founding sins of slavery and genocide. In fact, many white Americans — including President Donald Trump — do not think doing so is even necessary. Meanwhile, the rest of us have been fighting and clawing for our rights since the founding of our republic. Republicans are seeking to steal the precious gains we have made in what can

only be described as a war on democracy. Unfortunately, many Democrats thought that this battle could be fought — and won — at the ballot box on 6 November. They were wrong for several reasons.

First, demographic change coupled with our constitutional provisions ensures that the current tyranny of the minority, which rules over the majority, will expand. There is little that can be done to stop it. Currently, the majority of the Senate, which is our upper House and the most powerful of the two legislative Houses, is elected by a slight minority. By 2040, demographers predict that a meagre one-third of Americans will elect two-thirds of this powerful institution. This is because Americans are fleeing to coastal states where jobs are and are likely to remain.



File image of US president Donald Trump. AP

Equally, young persons who bristle at xenophobia, homophobia, misogyny and other bigotry that are common in their rural and peri-rural hometowns are flocking to America's more cosmopolitan locales. Those left behind in the 'red states' are the most regressive Americans, most of whom vote Republican.

While many democracies with a bicameral legislature provide for equal representation of the federating units in the upper House, these have little power. In the United States, the Senate holds the most significant powers to appoint justices to the Supreme Court and federal judiciary as well as to confirm Cabinet picks.

The anti-Democrat Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, abused his power in the last term of the Barack Obama administration to prevent any of the president's judicial appointments from coming to a vote. Consequently, Trump has had the opportunity to appoint more than 100 judicial officials who have been vetted by the noxious Federalist Society to ensure that the nominees oppose a woman's right to choose, support pro-business interests, and back the tycoon's autocratic tendencies. Appallingly, McConnell declared that no judicial confirmations shall be made by a president unless his (sorry, ladies) party also controls the Senate.

Second, the same demographic future also ensures the dominance of the Republican Party in the selection of the president. The United States is not a direct democracy, but an indirect democracy through the system of the electoral college, which was devised to appease slave states after the Civil War. The number of electoral college votes for each state is equal to the number of congressional representatives. Astonishingly, most states award all the electoral votes to the winning presidential candidate: Only Maine and Nebraska have a variation of 'proportional representation'. This system of 'winner takes all' helps explain why presidents like Trump lose the popular vote but become commander-in-chief by ^{close} winning the electoral college.

Third, the House of Representatives is the only body where some modicum of competition remains in principle. In practice, these races are not competitive. In 2016, only 20 percent of the congressional races were competitive. This is due to gerrymandering, selective sorting of residents into ideologically coherent neighbourhoods and myriad outright racist efforts by the Republican Party to prevent people of colour from voting.

Fourth is the courts. Many Americans who are disgusted by the tyranny of this regime offer the Panglossian platitudes that our "courts will protect us". The Supreme Court has been remade by Trump. Most observers expect this Republican court to overturn the *Roe versus Wade* ruling, which protects a woman's right to choose, eviscerate hard-earned protections for LGBTQI community, rubber-stamp Trump's abuse of power and further erode protections for American consumers and natural resources. Our courts will not protect the freedom of that majority of Americans who are not white cis males.

Fifth, the United States lacks an independent election commission or any dedicated body that can evaluate malfeasance in a race, declare results null and void, and order a do-over. This job falls to the courts and requires aggrieved parties to muster financial resources and file suit — America's anemic Federal Election Commission only monitors campaign finances.

To make all of these structural outrages all the more discomfiting, the 'red states' labour under the delusion that the 'blue states' live off them — nothing is further from the truth. Blue states are the economic engines of the United States: They literally subsidise the red

state residents. They are so rich they can literally import their arugula. The red states have human development indicators that are more on par with developing nations than our developed peers.

America's most economically productive Americans are the majority; yet we are ruled by a regressive minority. There are no easy remedies to resuscitate America's choking democracy. The demographic shifts will not be halted because the people go where the opportunities are. Surely, a shift of power between the two Houses of the Congress would restore some modicum of democracy as would eliminating the anachronistic electoral college.

But why would the Republicans ever consider actual democratic reforms when the current tyranny secures their interests — perhaps in perpetuity? If the Republicans won't desist from gerrymandering and robbing people of colour of their franchise, this treasonous party will surely resist constitutional change to rebalance power.

Another welcome innovation would be introducing term limits to Supreme Court justices' tenures instead of the current system of lifetime appointments. Both parties will likely resist this change because they view such life-time appointments as part of a president's legacy.

Without serious constitutional reforms, America has no hope of becoming a democracy. Americans cannot expect this to change with 'get out the vote' initiatives. What is needed is massive civil disobedience until these changes are enacted. If Americans are unwilling to mobilise to secure these changes, they deserve this tyranny, which will continue to masquerade as democracy.

The writer has authored the books Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War (OUP, 2014) and In Their Own Words: Understanding Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (forthcoming 2018).

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Abyss Drake

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Stephen B. Billings

You apparently do not understand the US and it's Constitution. The democracy is stronger than ever and the main reason is the written. You sould like a Democrat that was defeated!

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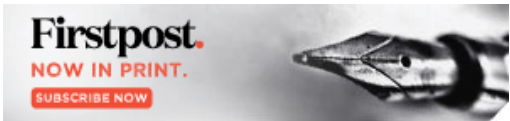


Jeff Carroll

I agree but we can't play Nostradamus because the one constant will always be change.

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AUSW Vs NZW
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