ABSTRACT

We all know the famous Abraham Lincoln quote from the Gettysburg Address, “A government of the people by the people, for the people.” However, do Americans and even British citizens feel like “the people” are in charge of the government? With constant criticism directed at the representational democracies of the United States and United Kingdom, political scholars along with a few lawmakers have contemplated alternative ways to elect representative officials. Some of the proposed electoral reforms are based on proportional representation (PR) systems, with arguments that proportional representation better reflects the vote share and thus the will of the electorate. However, critics argue that there is a lack of accountability with PR, meaning the electorate has no control over the actions of the elected official. Ideally, representational democracies fulfill three major requirements. First, there must be a function that allows the electing body to hold the elected agent accountable for his or her actions on their behalf. Second, the end result of an elected government must accurately reflect the end result of the vote share. Third, the electoral system may not directly or indirectly exclude any certain non-geographically based constituency. The following analysis will explore and evaluate the current “first past the post” systems used in the U.S. and U.K., as well as the proposed PR systems including single transferrable vote, party lists, and mixed member proportional. The Electoral College will be separately evaluated. The goal is to determine whether one-system functions, based on the three above requirements, as a better representative democracy than the other, and whether the governments of the U.S. and U.K. may want to consider an electoral reform to that system.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELECTORAL SYSTEMS OF THE U.S. AND U.K</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORMULA OF REPRESENTATIVES DEMOCRACIES</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVALUATIONS</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TERRITORIAL CONSITUENCIES</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIRST PAST THE POST</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTY LISTS</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIXED MEMBER PROPORTIONAL</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

Since the Constitutional Convention, the United States has used a single-member-plurality (SMP), or what is also called a “first past the post” (FPTP) system. FPTP is when a candidate, party, or even cause—as in the case of Ireland’s recent referendum on gay marriage—is victorious when they receive an overall majority of the votes casted by the voting electorate. The United Kingdom also uses a form of FPTP, even though the British legislate through a Parliamentary government, as opposed to the U.S. Congressional system. While the United Kingdom and the United States each have their variations in how and who is elected to what position, FPTP remains conceptually constant in their national elections. However, the FPTP system has been put under scrutiny in both nations, most recently in the U.K. after Prime Minister David Cameron and the Conservative Party won an outright majority in the 2015 General Election, despite only receiving just under 37% of the popular vote (Kellner, 2015). This scrutiny was also propelled when smaller political parties such as the Green Party and United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) each won only one seat in the Parliament’s 650-member House of Commons, despite UKIP winning 12.6% of the vote and the Greens winning 3.8% (Kellner, 2015). This reflection of the electorate immediately led to outcry for electoral reform, specifically to a variant of the proportional representation systems.

On the opposite side of the Atlantic Ocean, the U.S. Congressional elections dominated by the two-party system has also come under fire, primarily from those whose political preferences do not align with the elected agent and feel ostracized from political representation. The Electoral College designed and proposed by James Madison in the final days of the Constitutional Convention has been used as the system of electing the
nation's president (Bennett, 2015). However this system has also been highly criticized due to the final result not reflecting the popular vote of the electorate on certain occasions. The most recent example of this was the 2000 Presidential elections, when the Democratic nominee Al Gore lost to Republican George W. Bush, despite winning the greater percentage of the popular vote. This kind of result, which has happened a total of four times in U.S. history (Longley, 2015), has led to calls and actions to abolish the Electoral College altogether and use the popular vote as the primary means for electing the president, similar to how members of Congress are elected.

The argument for electoral reform in both western nations of the U.S. and U.K. has recently gained momentum as growing frustrations among the electorate have become more prominent in the early years of the 21st century. In the U.K., there has been an outcry for a switch to a PR system similar to the electoral systems of Denmark, Australia, or New Zealand and Germany. Both Congressional elections and the Electoral College used in the U.S. Presidential elections have always had their critics, and the Electoral College even survived being abolished by proposed Constitutional amendments on at least two occasions (Longley, 2015, p. 1). Electoral reform in either nation could have a huge impact on political campaigns, strategies, regulations and primary goals. So is there a need of electoral reform? The following analysis explores and evaluates both the current and proposed electoral systems in the U.S. and U.K, with the overall intent to determine what will work as the most “fair” democratic representation option, and if electoral reform is needed at all. To do this, there are several components of democratic representation that need to be identified and fulfilled. First, in order of importance, does the system have an ability to hold the elected agent accountable for their actions on
behalf of the constituency? Second, does the outcome of the system generally reflect the final vote with consistent accuracy? Third, does the system exclude certain constituencies on more than just a geographical basis? It is these three requirements that make a "fair" electoral system, and these are the questions that political scholars and proponents of electoral reform must ask when evaluating FPTP, PR and the Electoral College. In the end, it may be that there is no system that can fully accomplish all three of these requirements, meaning rather than picking the right system, U.S. and U.K. governments may have to consider different routes to finding the best solution for electoral reform, or otherwise be forced into simply taking the best available, based on what values are most important to their representative society. As Peter Kellner, President of YouGov said, "we should at least start from a recognition that no system is ideal and that our choice depends on our priorities... our quest is not for perfection but the least bad way forward" (Kellner, 2015).

**ELECTORAL SYSTEMS OF THE U.S. AND U.K.**

In the U.S., there is a dominant two-party system between the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. The national electoral system for electing members of the legislative branch is a FPTP system, using popular vote totals from territorial constituencies known as Congressional districts and states to determine the winning candidates. However, the Presidential elections, while still utilizing FPTP, does not use popular vote as the determining vote. Instead, U.S. Presidents are elected through the Electoral College, an electoral system giving each state a certain number of votes based on population. For example, large, populated states like New York and California have 29 and 55 votes, respectively (Longley, 2015). On the other hand, smaller, less populated
states like Rhode Island or Utah each only have four or six votes (Longley, 2015). On Election Day, a presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes from a state wins the specified number of Electoral College votes of that state (so a candidate who wins California gets 55 votes, then wins Utah gets six votes, and so on). In the end, whoever reaches the necessary majority of Electoral College votes to win, which is currently 270 votes, is elected President of the United States (Longley, 2015).

Across the Atlantic Ocean, the United Kingdom also utilizes a FPTP electoral system. However, there are key differences between the U.S. and U.K. systems of legislative and executive branches of governments. While the U.S. uses a Congressional system, consisting of a House of Representatives and a Senate, the executive branch (the Presidency) is a separate entity from the legislative branch. The U.K. utilizes a Parliamentary system, where the executive and legislative branches are combined. Parliament is made up of two houses, the House of Commons (HOC) and the House of Lords. Members in the House of Lords are appointed positions rather than elected, so the focus of this analysis will remain solely on the HOC. The HOC is composed of a ruling majority government and a minority opposition, a design meant to create balance when creating and scrutinizing legislation. The ruling body, the government, is composed of the political party (or parties, in the case of a hung election) whose members won the majority of seats in the general election. The opposition is then made up of the other political parties whose members of Parliament (MP) also won seats in the election. These MPs, similar to U.S. Congressional members, are elected via popular vote in territorial based constituencies. The Prime Minister, elected leader of the U.K., is a MP and the elected leader of the political party that controls the government, and the opposition
leader is the leader of the political party that has the most seats in the opposition.

Typically, the leaders on both sides of the HOC are from two main parties, the Conservatives or Labour. Unlike the U.S. however, the U.K. has a multi-party system, made up of the two main parties and also smaller parties such as the Green Party, the Liberal Democrats, and UKIP. Also different from the U.S., these party leaders and potential national leaders are not directly elected by the electorate. Party leaders are first elected by members of their party to lead the party. Then, whoever is the party leader of the party that wins control of the government, should they win their own Parliamentary seat, in turn becomes Prime Minister. An example would be in the most recent general election in May 2015 where David Cameron, leader of the Conservative Party, was re-elected as Prime Minister not only because he won his own Parliamentary seat, but also the Conservatives won an outright majority of seats in the HOC.

FORMULA OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACIES

Before it is possible to analyze how well democratic representation works in respect to the U.S. and the U.K., there must be a concept-based template that sets the structure of democratic representation in a generally well-accepted form. The structure used in this analysis will be prescribed from Urbinati and Warren (2008). In this work, Urbinati and Warren layout the “standard account” of representative democracies made of four key features:

First, representation is understood as a principal agent relationship, in which the principals—constituencies formed on a territorial basis—elect agents to stand for and act on their interests and opinions, thus separating the sources of legitimate power from those who exercise that power.
Second, electoral representation identifies a space within which the sovereignty of the people is identified with state power. Third, electoral mechanisms ensure some measure of responsiveness to the people by representatives and political parties who speak and act in their name. Finally, the universal franchise endows electoral representation with an important element of political equality. (Urbinati and Warren, 2008, p. 389)

Both the United States and the United Kingdom fit well into Urbinati and Warren’s standard account of a representative democracy. Both utilize national constituencies, determined by figurative physical boundaries that elect personnel to represent their respective views and opinions in legislation (Urbinati and Warren, 2008). Second, there is a clear identification in both nations of the citizenship’s sovereignty by the state powers. Furthermore, there is a way for the electorate to hold their representatives accountable for their actions representing the constituency, fulfilling the third requirement. Lastly, both systems claim that their respective democracies have full civil liberties in which all the citizenry are political equals, although that statement has been put into question on more than one occasion. Overall, the core concept “standard account” defines the basic relationship between the constituency and the elected representative, and accurately reflects both representative democracies in the U.S. and U.K, allowing the use of this core template to properly assess their electoral systems.

In addition to their definition for the standard account, Urbinati and Warren also laid out a basic formula that will be crucial for analyzing the first requirement of a fair electoral system, accountability. The formula, which characterizes the relationship
between the electorate and elected official, first starts with, "representative X being authorized by constituency Y to act with regard to good Z. Authorization means that there are procedures through which Y selects or directs X with respect to Z. Ultimate responsibility for the actions or decisions of X rests with Y" (Urbinati and Warren, 2008, p. 396). They further explain, "Political representation involves representative X being held accountable to constituency Y with regard to good Z. Accountability means that X provides, or could provide, an account of his or her decisions or actions to Y with respect to Z, and that Y has a sanction over X with regard to Z" (Urbinati and Warren, 2008, p. 396). In the United States, members of Congress (X) are elected by their respectful constituencies (Y) to act, decide, and vote on their behalf in Congress, for the good of that constituency (Z). In return, the constituency can hold the Congressional member accountable for their actions through electoral mechanisms such as political elections. If constituents (Y) are displeased with the actions and choices of X for Z, Y can choose not to re-elect X, and vice-versa in the case that X has represented Y well for the good of Z. This same relationship characterizes the United Kingdom as well; with the only difference being the U.K. utilizes a Parliamentary legislative body as opposed to the Congressional body in the U.S.

EVALUATIONS

Evaluations of the United States' and the United Kingdom's current electoral systems, as well as the proposed reforms, will be conducted on a separate basis. Also, evaluating the applications of these systems to the U.S. and U.K. will remain separate. Although the electoral structures share similarities, differences in government structure as well as party influence in elections create distinct enough distinctions that what may be a
significant evaluation factor of one nation may not be significant in the other. There are, however, exceptions where impacts of an electoral system may be similar in both nations. In this case, both the U.S. and U.K. will be evaluated together.

The following evaluations will be conducted in order, starting with the current FPTP systems, followed by the proposed electoral reforms based on proportional representation. With proportional representation there are three main variants used: single transferable vote (STV), party list, and mixed member proportional (MMP).

TERRITORIAL CONSTITUENCIES

The first consequence of the current electoral systems, which is identified in the formula defined by Urbinati and Warren (2008), is significant in both the U.S. and U.K. constituencies based by invisible, territorial boundaries, define the main electorate for both members of Congress and Parliament, as well as the American Presidency using the Electoral College. Initially, these territorial constituencies are designed in favor of equally dividing and organizing the electorate, where elected officials act as the “voice” for that particular region. In both the U.S. and U.K., electoral territories are guaranteed equal representation in government through terms set by geographically based constituencies and population. However, Urbinati and Warren (2008) are quick to identify one of the main problems with residency-based constituencies is that primary issues brought forward will also tend to be just residency-based. A further concern is that because the issues of the electorate are only geographical in nature, the choices and action taken by the representative agent will only be geographically focused as well, excluding a broader, more national perspective on issues necessary for proper representation of the nation as a whole.
The other issue with territory-based constituencies is the exclusion of non-territory electorates such as race, class, religion, gender, single-issue based, and so on. (Urbinati and Warren, 2008, p. 396). According to Urbinati and Warren, "Non-geographical constituencies are represented only insofar as they intersect with the circumstances of location, producing only an accidental relationship between democratic autonomy (particularly the distributions of opportunities necessary for self-determination) and forms of representation" (Urbinati and Warren, 2008, p. 396). Since geographical issues are the primary issues for geographically based constituencies, other electorates are often disadvantaged when it comes to political representation (Urbinati and Warren, 2008). However, there are multiple forms of malleability to this issue. First, it is not accurate to say that constituents are only concerned about geographical based issues. There are state governments in the U.S. and local councils in the U.K. that act as the primary governance when it comes to geographically based issues. Generally, the federal level (Congress and the House of Commons) is more concerned with handling nationwide-based issues, meaning that geographical-based issues encompass all constituencies as a whole. While the elected agents are obligated to serve in the best interests of their constituency, laws and legislation will always be structured on what is determined to be nationwide interests. In regard to non-geographical constituencies, while they may not be directly represented, it is not uncommon for elected representatives to voluntarily claim representation of non-geographical constituencies such as minorities (Urbinati and Warren, 2008, p. 396). There are also caucuses and other groups within Members with specific intentions to represent a non-geographical constituency. While this causes issues with that particular constituency to hold that
representative accountable as geographical constituencies can, it may help lessen the
issue-based disadvantages they already have. Overall, Urbinati and Warren set a proper
standard of democratic representation as well as properly define the relationship of the
electorate and the elected agent. While it is important to recognize the representational
favoring of geographical constituencies, they do have as much as an unfair advantage as
Urbinati and Warren imply in regard to the U.S. and U.K.

FIRST PAST THE POST

Undergoing the evaluation of the three designated requirements for a
representational democracy, using the standard account set by Urbinati and Warren
(2008), the U.S. has its share of both successes and failures when it comes to fulfilling a
fair and effective political representation. In the U.S., the SMP electoral system allows
the electorate to directly elect members of Congress based on their geographical location.
This direct relationship between agent and constituent is what former Republican Senator
of Utah, Robert F. Bennett (2015), argues is the major victory of the current electoral
form in the U.S. in regard to the accountability requirement. Bennett also noted that
unlike British MPs who can be moved to different constituencies despite their residency,
American members of Congress (and candidates) must maintain residency in their
respective constituencies (Bennett, 2015). This in turn adds to a more intricate and
personal relationship between constituents and their elected officials. This residency also
directly gives an elected official first-hand experience of the issues the constituency
faces. However, as noted by Urbinati and Warren (2008), there is a chance that issues of
focus will only be geographical in nature.
Do geographical constituencies work for the betterment of the nation as a whole though? Bennett stated, "Recognizing and respecting a legislator's ties to his constituency goes a long way towards breaking down ideological barriers" (Bennett, 2015).

Representing one constituency, based on its geographical boundaries, gave the former Senator the ability to often oppose the will of his party's leadership if he felt it did not positively reflect the will of his constituency. When going against party leader Senator Mitch McConnell, Bennett would justify his vote by simply stating, "This is what I have to do as a Senator from Utah" (Bennett, 2015). Former Senator Bennett recognizes that what may be good for one region may not be good for the region he represents, therefore in the case of the U.S., geographically based constituencies not only create a more intricate and meaningful relationship between a constituent and Representative or Senator, but also allow that elected official to act solely in the name of that constituency, ultimately creating more compromise when making political decisions.

Where FPTP consequentially fails in the U.S. (in the case of Congressional elections) is with both the requirements of accurate representation and inclusion. In a close Congressional race, a winning Republican candidate could squeak by a win with a marginal 51% of the vote share. In reality, that means the 49% of constituents who voted Democrat or independent theoretically would not be fairly represented in Congress. With FPTP there is also a lack of inclusion in representation. More precisely, the exclusion of those who fall within non-territorial based constituencies including race, ethnicity, class, gender, and environment, among other causes or identities (Urbinati and Warren, 2008, p. 396). The latter is arguably solved as all parts of the U.S. (minus territories) fall within a Congressional district boundary and therefore is nationally represented. However, non-
terrestrial based constituencies do not receive the same direct inclusionary form of representation. In the case of territorial-based constituencies, issues and priorities in representation fall within the territorial sector, leaving non-territorial constituencies at a major disadvantage when it comes to having their views and issues properly represented in Congress (Urbinati and Warren, 2008). There are some cases where elected officials will claim to represent more than just what is within the boundaries of their constituency (Urbinati and Warren, 2008). For example, Barney Frank, a former U.S. Representative from Massachusetts, who claimed to represent homosexual citizens outside of his constituency, or Bill Richardson, former governor of New Mexico, who declared he represented Latinos even beyond his own state (Urbinati and Warren, 2008). This, which Urbinati and Warren calls “surrogate representation,” is the closest, direct inclusion of representation that non-residency based constituencies receive in the current U.S. electoral system (2008, p. 397).

As opposed to the U.S., the major failure of the current U.K. electoral system is the lack of accurate representation in regards to the vote share. For example, in the most recent general election of 2015, the Conservative Party won an outright majority in Parliament, winning 331 seats total (BBC, 2015). Despite winning over half the seats in Parliament, the Conservative party only received 36.9% of the overall popular vote (BBC, 2015). This result means that over 63% of the United Kingdom said no to a Tory regime, yet Prime Minister Cameron and his Conservatives secured nearly 51% of Parliament.

The outcome of the 2015 general election is a direct result of the FPTP system used by the U.K. government. However, despite an inaccurate reflection of the popular
vote, there are those who stand by the current system. Craig Whittaker (2015), Conservative MP for the Calder Valley constituency, argues that fulfilling the accountability requirement is what justifies the FPTP system in the U.K. Drawing comparison on how the members of European Parliament are elected via a proportional representation system, Mr. Whittaker claims that with proportional representation, "...what we see is a lack of accountability. Ask someone in the Calder Valley [constituency] who their MP is and chances are they would know—but ask them who any one of their 7 MEP’s are and you will struggle to find someone to name one" (2015).

While Whittaker admits that the PR used by European Parliament does not eliminate geographical based constituencies, the idea that a PR electoral system with geographical boundaries still suffers from lack of accountability furthers the argument that PR systems do not hold elected agents accountable. Whittaker concluded his thoughts stating, “With a FPTP system you know exactly the person you are voting for and with about 60% of the electorate in the U.K. deemed to be floating voters, they know exactly [who] it is who is responsible and accountable” (2015).

SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE

Single transferrable vote (STV), used primarily in Irish and Australian Senate elections, is a form of voting where voters rank the candidates on the ballot based on preference (Electoral Reform Society, n.d.). This system is used in constituencies that elect multiple candidates, where each voter gets one vote, and the vote goes to their ranked preferences based on necessity (Electoral Reform Society, n.d.). For example, if an election is held and voter’s first choice has already received enough votes to win, that voter’s vote would then be issued to the second preferred candidate ranked on that voter’s
ballot, and so on until all elected positions are filled (Electoral Reform Society, n.d.).

With single-member constituencies, the count would work in the same manner, however when one candidate received enough first preference votes, the election would be called.

With STV there are both positive and negative impacts. First, thanks to the ranking system, there are far less “spoilt” (unusable or unreadable) ballots, and STV provides the most options to the voter (Electoral Reform Society, n.d.) fulfilling both the inclusionary and accurate representation requirements. Furthermore, STV by design actually gives more representation to non-geographical constituencies such as women and minorities.

According to the Electoral Reform Society:

With STV and multi-member constituencies, parties have a powerful electoral incentive to present a balanced team of candidates in order to maximize the number of higher preferences that would go to their sponsored candidates. This helps the advancement of women and ethnic-minority candidates, who are often overlooked in favor of a "safer" looking candidate. (n.d.)

By giving more representation to non-geographical constituencies such as women and minorities, STV provides a much fairer and more equal voice to constituencies that otherwise are fundamentally left out by the current systems in the U.S. and U.K. Despite the potential positive impacts, however, STV would appear rather pointless to install.

With the U.K and the way the single-member constituency boundaries are setup, the system would remain for the most part unchanged. Candidates would still have to market themselves as better than the others, and in the end a “first preference vote” would have the same effect as just a regular vote. Fundamentally, there would not be any change to
how the system works apart from simply creating a more confusing ballot, which in turn
could actually deter political participation and possibly effect the ability to fulfill both the
accountability relationship and inclusiveness requirement.

From the U.S. perspective, the end result by installing STV systems would
ultimately be the same because of the single-member Congressional districts. However,
where STV may actually work in creating a fairer and more reflective representation of
the electorate is if the Congressional districts were erased, and the constituency boundary
was instead the state boundary, as it is for Senate races. The same amount of
Representatives would be elected, but it would be by the state as a whole. For example, if
Utah erased its four Congressional districts and instead voted for all four of its
Representatives with the state as a complete electorate, it would not only create a more
inclusive electoral system for non-territorial constituencies, but could possibly create a
more competitive and broader candidate range. If the Republicans and Democrats each
put up four candidates, plus a few independents would most likely jump in, the ballot
paper would go from the typical two or three candidates to possibly nine or even ten.
Voters would then rank the candidates, which, according to the STV theory of the
Electoral Reform Society (n.d.), would lead to a more representational and fair outcome,
while still maintaining a constituency connection and accountability. However, there is
one issue with switching to STV in this regard. In states that are consistently Republican
like Utah, or Democratic like California, it would be extremely difficult for opposing
party candidates to be elected in if the Congressional districts were erased. For example,
Utah, although a very red state, has one Congressional district that actually is very
marginal in the Congressional elections. The Fourth Congressional District just recently
came under Republican control again in 2014 when Republican candidate Mia Love defeated Democratic candidate Doug Owens. However, there is no doubt the 2016 elections are shaping up to be a competitive rematch for the Fourth District. But what if the district boundaries were erased, and the state as a whole became the constituency, as it is in Senate races? What would happen is any Democratic candidates would be placed at a disadvantage, since they would only have major support coming from what would be the Fourth District, while the remainders of their opponents gain support from the entire rest of the state. So, STV may improve fair and equal representation in some states like battleground states, but would accomplish the exact opposite in states that are dominated by one party, ultimately failing the inclusiveness and accuracy requirements.

PARTY LISTS

With STV not being a real, considerable option in the case of electoral reform in the U.S. and U.K., another potential system would be party lists. This system is used in the British elections of European Parliament and over 80 other countries (Electoral Reform Society, n.d.). Party lists, in a proportional representation regard, is when political parties present a list of electable candidates for contended seats, and in turn receive seats based on the parties vote share (Electoral Reform Society, n.d.). For example, if in an election there are 100 seats available and there are three parties putting candidates forward, each party would put 100 candidates on a list and rank them based on party member and/or leadership preference (Electoral Reform Society, n.d.). The vote would occur, with the three parties as the possible options on the ballot. The popular vote would be tallied, and however much of the percentage of the vote each party received would be reflected in how many seats they would have won (Electoral Reform Society,
So if Party A won 54% of the vote, Party B won 32% and Party C won 14%, Party A would receive 54 seats, Party B receives 32 seats, and Party C would receive 14 seats (Electoral Reform Society, n.d.). So which candidates get the seats? As mentioned earlier, the parties would each have a list ranking their 100 candidates from 1 to 100 in preference. This list, depending on whether the party list system is an "open list" variant, where voters get to rank the candidates who get seats, or "closed list" where the party prepares and ranks the list directly, would determine who gets to become the elected official (Electoral Reform Society, n.d.). So if Party A won 54 seats, the candidates ranked 1 through 54 on the list would receive a seat. For Party B, candidates 1 through 32 would receive seats, and so on until all seats are properly distributed and filled (Electoral Reform Society, n.d.).

As was the case with FPTP and STV, there are both failures and successes that occur from the party list systems, which in this case would have similar effects and results in the U.S. and the U.K. On the positive side, every vote in the election would have equal value, and the proportionality of seat control would accurately reflect the voting results, fulfilling the accuracy requirement. But when it comes to reaching the accountability standard, the party lists method would actually fall short. As noted by Whittaker (2015) and the Electoral Reform Society (n.d.), there is a major lack of accountability. "Closed party lists are completely impersonal, weakening any link between the representative and a regional area" (Electoral Reform Society, n.d.). With party lists in national elections, whether with open lists or especially with closed lists, there is no way to guarantee that every constituency is going to be represented. If the entire top listed candidates on a party list are from southern areas, which means that
northern constituencies are going to be improperly represented in a formed government. Also, when the candidates are not selected by a territorial basis, who does the electorate hold accountable (Whittaker, 2015)? Overall, the party lists system is a perfect example of how extremely difficult it is to create an electoral system that has both fair representation and full accountability.

**MIXED MEMBER PROPORTIONAL**

The last considerable option for electoral reform in regards to proportional representation is Germany’s *Personalisierte Verhältniswahl*, also known as the mixed member proportional (MMP) system (Krennerich, 1997). Countries like Germany and New Zealand use MMP, and its design incorporates both single-member constituencies and party lists (New Zealand Electoral Commission, 2014). In MMP, a voter gets two votes, one party vote in which they vote for the party they support, and one for the Member of Parliament to represent their constituency (Krennerich, 1997).

Due to similarities in population and governing body structures between the U.S., U.K., and Germany, this analysis will be better suited to use the German form of MMP as its evaluation subject. German Parliament has 656 seats, with the possibility of surplus seats, and 328 single-member district constituencies (Krennerich, 1997). In their national elections, the electorate gets the two votes, the personal vote (Erststimme) and the party vote (Zweitstimme), and the total votes are tallied to determine the overall winners in the constituency races and the proportion of seats in Parliament each party will receive (Krennerich, 1997). The personal vote is for the voter’s preference of competing candidates in the single-member districts, while the party vote is the preference of the competing national parties (Krennerich, 1997). At the conclusion of the voting period, the
total of both votes are tallied separately. The candidates in the constituency races who overall received the most votes win a seat in Parliament (Krennerich, 1997). An allocation of these seats is then done within the 16 federal German states (Krennerich, 1997). The parties then in turn receive a proportion of seats in Parliament equal to the percentage of the overall vote they received, minus the number of seats directly won in the constituency races. These seats are then divvied up through a closed party list (Krennerich, 1997). The one exception, however, is the parties who receive less than 5% of the popular vote (Krennerich, 1997). Parties who receive less than 5% of the vote, or fail to have at least three of their candidates directly elected in the constituency races, do not qualify to receive seats through the party list vote share (Krennerich, 1997). In some instances, a party may win more single-member districts in a federal state than the number of allocated seats to the party from the second place vote. The party in this case would still be awarded these seats, deemed “surplus seats” (Krennerich, 1997, p. 76). Because of this rule, it is not uncommon to see German Parliament actually increase in size (Krennerich, 1997).

There are both success and failures with MMP when it comes to accountability, representational accuracy, and inclusiveness. However, MMP has more, although not complete, success than any other system considered with achieving all three requirements. First the single-member district races allow an intricate relationship between the elected agent and the constituency. It also gives the electorate an effective way to hold the elected agent accountable (Krennerich, 1997). It could be argued that those who did not vote for the overall winner in the district race would not be properly represented, but the party vote makes up for where the personal vote lacks. When it
comes to accurate representation based on the vote share, the party vote component creates a relatively accurate representation. Where this creates problems, however, is that coalitions in government are regularly formed due to larger parties not being able to gain outright majorities. Coalitions are susceptible to interparty and coalition member disputes, causing lack of new laws being passed and stalemates stalling the legislative process. When the governing body does nothing, it qualifies as a lack of proper representation for the electorate will. Where MMP also fails is with the inclusiveness requirement. Parties that receive fewer than 5% of the vote share, unless they have at least three members elected directly, do not get a share of seats allocated from the party vote. This means that smaller parties and their supporters are excluded in the German government (Krennerich, 1997). It is common for supporters of smaller parties to vote strategically due to this excluding factor, and while Krennerich (1997) argues that strategic voting can be considered good for a representational democracy, in reality a true and perfect representational democracy would never need strategic voting because all people would be properly represented. However, PR does better in incorporating social and political movements, meaning it is a better option than FPTP in regard to the third requirement (Krennerich, 1997). Overall, out of the three PR systems evaluated thus far, there is no doubt MMP best covers the three requirements of a truly representational democracy.

THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

In U.S. Congressional and U.K. Parliamentary elections, it could be argued that these systems are in need of electoral reform. Whether or not proportional representation systems are a viable solution, remains unclear, however the findings in this analysis thus
far would favor the proponents of MMP. Aside from Congress, there is another electoral system in the U.S. that has come under major scrutiny. James Madison first designed the Electoral College in the United States, structured in the Constitution, in the final days of the Constitutional Convention out of fear of making the Presidential Elections a direct popular vote (Longley, 2015, p. 3). Longley explains that in the early stages of U.S. political history:

...travel and communication was slow and difficult at that time. A very good candidate could be popular regionally, but remain unknown to the rest of the country. A large number of regionally popular candidates would thus divide the vote and not indicate the wishes of the nation as a whole. On the other hand, election by Congress would require the members to both accurately assess the desires of the people of their states and to actually vote accordingly. This could have led to elections that better reflected the opinions and political agendas of the members of Congress than the actual will of the people. (2015, p. 3).

While expected to be a successful compromise at the time, what the Founders did not account for was the rise and overall dominance of political parties (Longley, 2015, p. 3). Thomas Jefferson, in coalition with Aaron Burr of New York, created “a party alliance made across state lines [that] negated the idea that electors were supposed to exercise independent judgment” (Bennett, 2015). It was Jefferson’s strategy to “cheat the system” that ultimately gave power of the Presidential elections to the states and political parties, creating the same problems we see today with the Electoral College (Bennett, 2015).
The U.S. has attempted to abolish the Electoral College and make the Presidential elections a direct, popular vote multiple times through drafting federal legislation. However, these attempts have come up short. In history, there has been just four occasions where the winner of the Presidential race did not win the overall popular vote: John Quincy Adams in 1824, Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876, Benjamin Harrison in 1888, and George W. Bush in 2000 (Longley, 2015, p. 3). Although the occurrence has been minimal, many would still argue that even just four times is too many times. Bennett is a supporter of the change. "...I would amend the Constitution, junk the Electoral College and give Congress authority to create a modern system that includes direct presidential elections. That should cover the nominating process as well as the general election" (Bennett, 2015)

The impacts of switching to a direct, popular vote actually could be positive in more than one way. Bennett recognized that:

Republicans could no longer ignore New York, Massachusetts and California; they would need to energize their supporters there. Democrats would have to do the same thing in Texas and all of the states in the South. "Flyover states" like Utah would see their first presidential campaigns in 40 years. Iowa and New Hampshire would slip back into the overall pool, no longer hailed as the kingmaker states. (2015)

Switching to the popular vote, while still emphasizing the importance of high population states, would switch emphasis from winning battleground states to getting supporters to the voting booths, more commonly known as getting out the vote. Gaining supporters across the country would be just as important as getting them out on Election
Day. Geographical location would not matter, meaning a switch would promote political inclusion, and possibly representation, of all constituencies. This increase in participation and inclusion makes a valid case for abolishing the Electoral College.

CONCLUSIONS

When it comes to the question of whether electoral reform in both western nations of the U.S. and U.K. is needed, the answer is that both nations are within reason to consider a PR based electoral reform. However, both the current and proposed systems have strengths and weaknesses in representation, fairness, and inclusiveness. MMP is proven to better fulfill all the three of the requirements of this analysis, than both the current FPTP systems of the proposed STV and party lists systems. A nation like the United Kingdom would best benefit from reforming to MMP, as MMP has proven success under other Parliamentary systems. Even so, MMP still struggles to fully complete these requirements due to its inabilities to properly represent smaller parties, meaning smaller parties in the U.K. could still be excluded, but on a much less significant level than the current electoral system of FPTP. On the other hand, The United States has a much more difficult answer to their issues with representative democracy. Under the two-party system, which was initially brought in by Thomas Jefferson and is not constitutionally founded (Bennett, 2015), it would be difficult to introduce any of the proposed PR systems and not have the same or different but just as significant, issues as they currently have with FPTP. If the U.S. wanted to reform its Congressional electoral system, it would ultimately have to consider abolishing the two-party premises that dominate U.S. politics. This change, unfortunately, is highly unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future. Overall, the findings resulting from this analysis suggest that when
considering a switch to an alternative electoral system, a nation may be forced to choose
simply based on their determined priorities of the representative democracy, whether that
be vote share accountability, accuracy, or inclusiveness. It is clear that all three are
difficult to find in an electoral system, ultimately determining the sad truth that no system
is will probably ever be perfect.

The other portion of this analysis, however, does provide a more definite answer
in regard to the Electoral College. The Electoral College was designed with no provisions
that would allow it to properly function with the rise of political parties. With that, the
solution again comes down to either eliminate partisanship in United States governance,
or abolish the Electoral College and determine the Presidency based solely on popular
vote. While it would be safe to infer many would prefer the first option, the latter is much
more feasible, and in so, promotes campaigns to reach out to all states, rather than just the
battleground states and those with high populations. Overall, there can be no doubt that
political scientists and government officials alike should at the very least consider
opening up a dialogue for possible electoral reform. Whether they decide to swap to PR,
or perhaps a completely different form of representational democracy, is entirely up to
them as national leaders. Creating that dialogue, however, is the first needed step to put
the long-standing issue of electoral reform to rest.
WORKS CITED


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