

## What's the Best Form of Government? Part II: Are There Any Alternatives?

“No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.”

– Winston Churchill.

**Q:** What if there are potentially better forms of government that haven't yet been tried?

### I. Rule by the Educated?

*Motivation:* The problem of voter ignorance.

*How will it work?*

Give the votes of the educated greater influence through plural voting, vote weighting, or restriction of suffrage.

*Will it work?*

- *Problem 1:* Doesn't justice/fairness require equal weighting?
- *Problem 2:* Can the selection/weighting criteria be reliably free of bias?
- *Problem 3:* Can the selection/weighting process be reliably protected from capture or destabilization by powerful interests?

### 2. Rule by Lottery?

*Motivation:* The problem of capture.

*How will it work?*

Elections are replaced by *lotteries*. Representatives are now *randomly chosen* from the whole eligible population (as with jury service). They serve for a single term (of perhaps three years). Instead of one assembly, there are different assemblies for different policy areas (e.g. one for agricultural policy, one for defence policy, one for education policy).

*Will it work?*

Some advantages of “lottocracy” (see Guerrero 2014b for more):

- “lotteries excel at preventing corruption or undue influence in the selection of representatives.”
- “lottery selection is likely to result in more descriptively representative officials than elections.”
- “those selected have not sought out political office”
- “elections lead elected officials to focus on those problems for which they can get or claim credit for addressing, and to ignore or put on the back burner those problems with a longer horizon or those solutions for which it is harder to get credit.”
- “the use of lotteries better respects fundamental ideals of equality and particularly political equality”

However...

- *Problem 1:* There's no guarantee that a lottery will produce a representative legislature: you may end up by chance with only conservatives, only the wealthy, only white people, etc.
- *Problem 2 (cf. Brennan):* Won't the members of a randomly selected assembly (on the whole) lack the knowledge needed to make good decisions?

### 3. Pay-per-Vote?

*Motivation:* The problem of the “tyranny of the majority”.

*How will it work?*

“Under **quadratic voting** (QV), everyone votes on proposals (in the case of referenda) or candidates by buying as many votes pro or con as they want. The price they pay is the **square of the number of votes** they buy. The amount collected is redistributed back to the voters on a pro rata basis” (Posner and Weyl 2014). Quadratic voting allows a minority to defend its interests—provided it is able and willing to pay for greater influence.

*Will it work?*

- *Problem 1:* Vote buying?!
- *Problem 2:* Doesn't this give too much influence to the rich?
- *Problem 3:* Doesn't this give too little influence to the poor and disaffected?

#### **Primary reading:**

Brennan, Jason (2016). Against Democracy, *The National Interest*, 6 September 2016.

<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/against-democracy-17605>

Guerrero, Alexander (2014a) The Lottocracy, *Aeon*, January 2014 <https://aeon.co/essays/forget-voting-it-s-time-to-start-choosing-our-leaders-by-lottery>

#### **Further reading:**

Brennan, Jason (2016) *Against Democracy*.

Brennan, Jason (2016) Trump Won Because Voters Are Ignorant, Literally. *Foreign Policy*, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2016. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/10/the-dance-of-the-dunces-trump-clinton-election-republican-democrat/>

Guerrero, Alexander (2014b). Against Elections: the Lottocratic Alternative, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 42:135-178.

Caplan, Bryan (2007). The Myth of the Rational Voter: Why Democracies Choose Bad Policies, *Cato Institute Policy Analysis Series No. 594*. <https://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa594.pdf>

Mill, John Stuart (1861). *Considerations on Representative Government*, Chapter 8.

Posner, Eric A. and E. Glen Weyl (2014). Voting Squared: Quadratic Voting in Democratic Politics, working paper.

Tormsen, David (2016). 10 Alternatives to Conventional Democracy, *Listverse*.

<https://listverse.com/2016/02/10/10-alternatives-to-conventional-liberal-democracy/>

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