

In Reviewing the Index of Democracies for 2022, we can see the difference between Total Democracies and Flawed Democracies, a position that the United States currently holds.

Why do the countries at the top of the list succeed while we flail? We can see that the winning countries are all small and have a single culture that makes governing easy. Political parties are mostly either centrist liberal or centrist conservative, making for less contentious issues. Although most of these smaller countries are now taking in immigrants, they have a well-established system of integrating them: learning the language, absorbing the cultural practices, and public education that promotes this sort of patriotism.

Can large, multi-cultural countries compete with these mono-culture democracies? To do so, we must decide what our basic values are and determine how they can be supported by most citizens, something we did better in the past.

The most basic need for all citizens is entrenched in the saying: "my fist stops at your nose." This means that your freedom to do what you please ends where it impacts on another's freedom. This must be entrenched in law.

A democracy cannot survive when bullies (physical or financial) impinge on the freedom of others. Democracies require fairness: equal rights under justice for all.

Equality does not mean that we are all the same; it means that we share equal rights and equal responsibilities. The United States has never been a perfect union, the desire of the Founding Fathers. It has been an experiment in progress, with the general trajectory aimed at improving our union. We improved our participation in governance from our original standard of property-owning White men to all White men, to all men (after emancipation of slaves), to all women. We now have a universal constituency, albeit voluntary.

Complete democracies mandate voting; it is not optional. It should not be optional for us either. Voting must be made easier, not more difficult.

America's Original Sins:

Our two original sins were a product of their times: black slavery and a semi-free status for women. It took a long struggle to end both of these original sins, but we are now suffering a backlash in the hands of those timeless enemies: bullies.

There is a backlash against voting rights of black and ethnic minorities by the Republican Party from the time of Newt Gingrich, who raised the notion that the Democrats were "the enemy," not the honorable opposition. When the Republicans saw that they were becoming a permanent minority party, they waged a war to hold power any way they could. The first attack was on Black and Minority voters in an attempt to lower the total votes for the Democrats.

They also worked to cram the courts with conservative judges, including the Supreme Court, seated today by three judges nominated by Donald Trump, not a fan of democracy. The undemocratically institution of the Senate can thwart popular voting. The senate rejected a nomination by a Democratic President, Barak Obama, and then pushed through three nominations by Donald Trump.

The other backlash is against women. This off-the-rails Supreme Court has just cancelled a right that has endured for half a century: abortion. In the specious claim that this right is not among the originalist rights, they ignore that neither were the emancipation of slaves, the voting rights of women, equal marriage rights, and equal treatment under the law of homosexual or transgender citizens.

All of these other rights, based on privacy, are now being threatened.

In looking at the history of democracies that are falling into failed democracies or autocracies, we can see that the first laws enacted took away the equal rights of women. The equality of women is anathema to bullies, who believe that the big fist must prevail. Women are always the victims of such men. When women's equality goes, so does democracy.

We can save our democracy by honoring our basic tenet: equal justice and equal rights for all. We need a revival of good character among our citizens and our leaders and

we must vote.

Do right because it is right.

684 words

Dr. Laina Farhat-Holzman is a historian, lecturer, and author of "How Do You Know That? Contact her at Lfarhat102@gmail.com or www.globalthink.net.