

What defines us as Americans is the Constitution. We are not one race, one gender, or only native-born, conditions that identify most older societies in the world. We are united by an idea: the idea that we can rule ourselves, that we can hold fair elections, and that we can have a peaceful transfer of power. We never anticipated losers who whine, lie, and refuse to step down.

We are obviously not living up to those ideals today. Our two political parties are no longer honorable competitors; they have become enemies. Facts are no longer totally accepted; one of the parties believes in "alternate facts," otherwise known as lies. And majority rule is thwarted by some outdated constitutional provisions.

Letters to the Editor around the country and columnist such as myself complain about minority rule, cynically established by exploiting outmoded constitutional protections. But now there is something afoot that is more than just complaining. It is the birth of a thinktank in the Pentagon called "The Societal Foundations of National Competitiveness," which despite its scholarly title has put out an important study: Why America is losing many of the seven attributes necessary for competitive success.

This exploration reflects the concern of most Americans today that we seem to be losing our way. Our system is not working as it should. The attributes include: national ambition and will (the pride in being a beacon to the world); national identity (that we are all Americans, regardless of birth or origin); an active state (government devoted to making life better); effective institutions (congress, courts, and regulatory agencies that protect us); a learning and adaptive society (citizens willing to accept new ideas and corrections to prejudices); and competitive diversity and pluralism (protection from unfair monopolies and exclusions of equality for some citizens based on gender, race, or place of origin).

What we have today is minority rule, thanks to two constitutional provisions: the Senate and the Electoral College, both of which prevent majority rule in elections. We have had several presidents elected by majorities but prevented from taking office because of the Electoral College, a provision that gives more power to minority states than to majority voters.

One other Constitutional institution, the Supreme Court, has lost its balance and has been stacked by questionably seated justices who are emboldened by their power to dismiss standing rights: a principle of stability observed by this court for the past half century. Women have lost the right to control their own bodies when abortion protection (privacy rights) was revoked and sent back to the states to do as they like.

The results of this decision are roiling the country, and the threat to do the same to other rights (marriage, recognition of the humanity of homosexual and bisexual individuals) hovers over all citizens. The consequences of the Court's actions have provoked anger and distrust of what was once considered an advocate of democracy.

A radical modernization of our 235-year-old Constitution is needed if the country is not to further descend into decline. One-third of our population (the Trump cult) shows alarming willingness to have a Leader for Life rather than a peaceful transfer of power after a fair and honest election. This must be countered.

The compromises that permitted the original Constitution to be ratified were to protect smaller states from urban domination. The founders devised the Electoral College rather than simple majority vote, which today permits small rural states undue power. Every other developed country practices majority rule.

Our very form of governing is hampered by the undemocratic Senate, an institution that gives great obstructing power to small states. Majority rule is increasingly impossible.

The Supreme and federal courts are designed to protect citizens from an overreaching Congress. Life expectancy today differs from the 18th century. Today, we have no protection from overreaching Supreme Court and Federal courts. Term limits are needed, along with limits to presidential nominations. One nomination permitted to a presidential term could fix this.

Amending the Constitution is a big job, but one expected by our founders. We have done this several times in our history.

684 Words

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