

# A Note On The ‘Lesser Of Two Evils’ Voting Argument In 2024



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09-10-2024 ~ *Why people, and radicals in particular, fail to grasp the reasoning behind this argument is truly mind-boggling.*

One of the most bewildering reactions on the part of certain segments of the U.S. left (whatever that means these days) is that every time there is a crucial election, and the voice of reason dictates casting a ballot in a direction which will help the most to keep out of public office the most extreme, and often enough the positively nuts, candidate in the race, is to scream that this is a case of “the lesser of two evils” thinking and to imply in turn that the one making such an argument is, somehow, a sellout.

[Noam Chomsky](#), of all people, has been the recipient of such brainless reactions for much of his life as he has repeatedly made the argument that voting for a third-party or independent candidate in a swing state would accomplish nothing but increase the possibility of the most extreme and positively nuts candidate winning the election.

Why people, and radicals in particular, fail to grasp the reasoning behind such an argument is truly mind-boggling. Either they don’t understand the nature of U.S. politics, with its winner-take-all election system, or they are simply wrapped up in the “feel-good” factor in politics to even notice such subtleties. But since even a fairly bright elementary student would most likely be able to understand the difference between a winner-take-all election system and proportional representation, it would be logical to conclude that what we have here is nothing less than a display of the politics of feeling good, which basically translates to

acting in whatever manner makes one feel good, politically speaking, regardless of the consequences of those actions.

Now, one might say that when the Comintern adopted Stalin's thinking in the 1920s that "social democracy is objectively the moderate wing of fascism" and proceeded later to lump together Hitler's Nazi party and the German Social Democratic Party that it was doing so out of conviction that the capitalist world was teetering on the brink of collapse and that the communists would inevitably emerge as the victorious party.

But what is the excuse of the tiny segment of U.S. self-professed radicals who fail to see that in order to advance the program of socialism we must first defeat Trump at the ballot box? Incidentally, this also happens to be the official stance of the [Communist Party USA](#). Yet, one can already hear the argument that U.S. communists must have also fallen victims of the picking a lesser of two evils mental attitude. However, in numerous conversations I've had with radicals (leftists, anarchists, and communists) across Europe, their own thinking was also in line with the reasoning of the Communist Party USA—namely, that priority number one of U.S. progressive voters should be to defeat wannabe dictator [Donald Trump](#) in the upcoming U.S. presidential election.

Can this be done by voting in a swing state for someone like Cornel West or Jill Stein when these candidates have zero chance of winning? My chances of being attacked and killed by a shark, which are estimated to be one in 3.75 million, are far greater than either of these two candidates making it to the White House in November 2024.

Oh, but I forgot! Such realizations hardly matter in comparison to *how good it might make one feel* by voting for a candidate outside of the two existing parties. Who cares if the candidate who would love to turn the U.S. into an autocracy wins the election? The other candidate is simply the lesser of two evils, which is like saying that it makes no difference to live under a political regime that is inadequate in realizing the ideals of a decent society and one that is bent on a process of societal fascistization.

Still, there is something even more bewildering with the lesser-of-two evils dictum that is thrown around by small segments of the left. Generally speaking, as [Noam Chomsky](#) has pointed out, there have been two doctrines about voting: the official

doctrine, “which holds that politics consists of showing up every few years, pushing a lever, then going back to one’s private pursuits,” and the “left doctrine.” For the latter, “politics consists in constant direct popular engagement in public affairs, including a wide variety of activism on many fronts. Occasionally an event comes up in the formal political arena called an ‘election...’ It’s at most a brief departure from political engagement.”

The third doctrine about voting, which is the “lesser of two evils” principle, has appeared on the political scene rather recently and, as Chomsky highlighted, is “now consuming much debate on the left.” The debate, he went to say, “also falls within the official doctrine, with its laser-like focus on elections.”

Most leftists, radicals and communists know fully well what the Democratic Party represents. Moreover, the recently held Democratic National Convention, with its pathetic effort to reclaim the mantle of “freedom” in a simultaneous display of militaristic jingoism, gave us ample warnings of what lies ahead. It takes no political genius to see that [Kamala Harris](#) is yet another centrist and wholly opportunistic Democrat who will change her tune as the circumstances dictate. Or, as the British political philosopher [John Gray](#) aptly put it, to recognize that she has “been abruptly transformed by compliant media from a vice-president commonly acknowledged to be barely competent into an uplifting national leader.”

Leftists, radicals and communists living in capitalist societies know that elections are hardly the stuff of political participation that will turn things around. Only grassroots activism can bring about meaningful change. But whenever elections come up, and proportional representation is not in the picture, we hold our nose and vote for the lesser-known threat to what is left of the democracy we have. And then we go back to real activism in order to change society and the world for the better.

It’s not complicated.

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