

# How the Two-Party System Polarized the Public

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## Abstract

The United States of America uses the two-party system as its political system. However, over the last decade, the polarization of society is directly linked to the two-party system's systematic error. The two-party system polarizes the people by creating two ideas that are on opposite sides. Because of the growing issue and lack of agreement in our government, it can be concluded that the two-party system may not be the best system for America. This paper identifies the flaws within the two-party system, such as those of the Electoral College, the unfair opportunity given to third-party candidates, and the influence of wealth in elections. When comparing our system to those of foreign countries, this study demonstrates how different frameworks could reduce polarization and improve democratic representation. Findings suggest that reforms like adopting ranked-choice voting, transitioning to a national popular vote, and implementing campaign finance regulations could modernize the U.S. electoral system, promoting inclusivity.

*Keywords: Two-party system, Political polarization, Electoral college, Ranked-choice voting, Third-party candidates*

## 1. Introduction

The two-party system in the United States is a cornerstone in the government and voting process. It consists of two major parties, the Republican and Democratic parties. Along with these two, there are other smaller parties including the Green party. Historically, the two-party system has been able to keep our country united and powerful, yet the country is starting to see this dissipate. Over the recent years, the two major parties have become polar opposites, creating hard decisions for voters in the US. This has led the system to contribute to the polarization of the US public, creating divisions in ideals, and divisions in humanity. Central to this issue are systemic flaws such as the Electoral College, which undermines the principle of majority rule. Additionally, the growing influence of wealth in political campaigns is marginalizing third-party candidates, leading to the limit of voter choice.

This paper examines these challenges, analyzing how the two-party system polarized the public. Additionally, this paper aims to evaluate alternative electoral systems that are used in other foreign countries. Through comparing and contrasting outside examples, this paper will propose actionable reforms that can modernize the U.S. framework, dampening societal divisions. Rather than create more problems, the main goal of this research paper is to bring to the table the issues that many Americans see and struggle with in our political system. Once these issues are at least heard, then this paper will, like previously said, offer proposals to either remove the problem or come to a proven compromise. Furthermore, given these pressing issues, this paper seeks to analyze the causes of polarization, as well as evaluate alternative electoral systems, and propose actionable reforms for a more inclusive and democratic electoral framework in our country.

## 2. Methods

This paper uses a systematic literature review approach. Peer-reviewed articles, case studies, and comparative analyses from databases such as JSTOR and PubMed were selected based on their relevance and credibility on the research objectives. Studies were only included if they provided empirical data or theoretical insights into the two-party system, the Electoral College, and alternative electoral frameworks that were discussed throughout the paper. Research was excluded if it was non-peer-reviewed sources or articles focused on non-democratic systems, as they would not add to the argument of the paper along with its credibility.

## 3. The Two-Party System: The Cause of the US's Divide

Written by an assistant professor in strategic studies, Irm Haleem (2020), this article delves into the primary role that the Electoral College plays in the US election. Haleem studied the possible outcomes of the 2020 election and the different views that each candidate brought to their supporters. Haleem concluded that the president of the US is not technically chosen by the people but by the people who live in states that matter in the election because of the electoral college. Also, based on the events that happened leading up to 2020, like the Coronavirus, Haleem drew up three different outcomes that were possible for the result of the election. One was a peaceful transfer of power. The next one was a situation in which Donald Trump, the president at the time, prematurely declares victory and the transfer of power is not peaceful. Finally, Haleem concluded that there was an ugly solution in which people rioted based on their extreme opinions of who truly won the election (Haleem, 2020). Haleem concluded that this voting system is a major part of the divide among the US people. Haleem (2020) uses qualitative analysis to examine the Electoral College's role in elections, presenting scenarios for the 2020 election outcome, including that of transfers of power. While Haleem's scenarios are insightful, the lack of quantitative data weakens the credibility of these conclusions. However, the study's emphasis on the Electoral College's inequities provides support for this paper's argument that reform is necessary.

In Emerson's (2021) comparative analysis of electoral systems, such as Ireland's ranked-choice voting and Germany's proportional representation, he highlights their impact. The study demonstrates how electoral thresholds influence voters and politics. However, its focus on parliamentary systems limits its direct applicability to the U.S. framework. Nonetheless, Emerson's findings highlight the benefits of ranked-choice voting in reducing polarization, aligning with this paper's purpose. Additionally, Emerson concludes that the most successful voting system results in a singular candidate winning the election rather than multiple candidates to stray away from altercations. Emerson first examines the Irish electoral system. In the Irish 3-seater constituency, a candidate will need about 20% (called the threshold) to gain office. However, in the Netherlands, a candidate will need about 67% of votes to hold office. Emerson notes that every electoral system has its own threshold, but some countries create a legal threshold as well. In Germany, you need 5% to get elected. Turkey makes the threshold 10%. According to the stats obtained, in these governments, the final outcome can be only a sole decision, one social choice, or one prioritization (Emerson, 2021). Differing throughout countries, Emerson states that the number of presidential winners can differ. Like the US, there may be just one winner in a presidential contest or in a single-seat constituency. However, like in Ireland, there can be a few in a multi-member constituency. The Dutch, an outlier, have over a hundred because their country is one constituency. Emerson notes that he worked as both a short and long-term observer in 20+ elections for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe to add to his credibility on the subject.

On November 12, 2023, Andrew Roth wrote a local paper about different systems that are being adapted locally in Michigan political elections. This quantitative and qualitative analysis highlights three cities in Michigan that moved to using a ranked choice voting system in their own elections. There are proposals for state-wide change but the proposals understand the forthcoming jumps in the journey to their implementation. Roth describes the new system that these local elections put in place. The system is called ranked voting. Under ranked choice voting, voters can choose multiple different candidates that they would like to see in office rather than just one. Candidates would need 50% or more of first choice votes to win and if no candidate obtains that threshold of 50%, a runoff would trigger. The candidate that received the lowest amount of first choice votes would be knocked out of the race. The first place

votes for the removed candidate would go to the voters' second choice and the process would continue until a candidate has at least 50% support from the remaining votes (Roth, 2023). Overall however, Roth sees that many Michigan politicians think that if there was to be a switch in voting systems, it should be statewide. This new voting strategy is being put up for amendment in 2026. One county clerk concluded that now is not the right time for a voting switch. He notes that with the addition of mail-in ballots and different ways to vote, Michigan voters should not have to adapt to a completely new voting system on top of that. Roth expands that with state wide changes, nationwide changes could come over the next decades. While Roth acknowledges logistical challenges, such as voter education and adaptation, the study's focus on local elections provides an argument for broader implementation. This approach offers a blueprint for introducing reforms in other parts of the U.S.

#### **4. Duverger's Law: Science Behind Two Parties**

In this 2020 article, Adam Ziegfeld describes the science behind the USA's political system. Ziegfeld states that the science is based on Duverger's Law, or in other words where only two main parties emerge in political systems but there is only one winner. Ziegfeld describes the different mechanisms that are a part of Duverger's Law. Some mechanisms are used to identify the major party in a system and to create minor parties which take some power away from the major party. Ziegfeld concludes that mechanisms under Duverger's Laws can give more insight on electoral rules in different two-party systems. Taking this science to the real world, to analyze the US's system, Ziegfeld compares it with a similar system, India's. Ziegfeld found that India's party system is based on Duverger's Law. He described that just like many people endorse candidates in the US, people called elites "endorse" candidates in India (Ziegfeld, 2020). These elites play a major part in Indian elections according to Ziegfeld. Additionally, Ziegfeld made the comparison that many mechanisms of Duverger's Laws play roles in both India and the US's systems. Concluding his summaries, Ziegfeld analyzed that findings in India are not just subject to India but they can apply to many other countries with similar systems in place. However, the study assumes that voter behavior is strategic, neglecting cultural and social influences. Despite this viewpoint, Ziegfeld's analysis provides insights into why the U.S. struggles to break free from its current system.

William H. Riker (1982), in a quantitative analysis, began his survey into Duverger's law history to show that a history does exist for it. Riker looks at the history of accepted revisions of Duverger's law and how the winning candidate favors the two-party system and the reason behind the US's system. Additionally, he identifies the truth behind political science having no repetition and if the two-party system correctly finds the winning candidate. Like the research paper before this, Riker notes that counterexamples of different political science have been analyzed and Duverger's law has been looked into and studied for years. He also describes that since the first enunciation by Droop, Duverger's law has been engraved in the rational choice theory that describes the behavior of both politicians and voters (Riker, 1982). Riker concludes that political science has a lot more effect in elections than many people realize or quite frankly know about. Riker also concluded an if-then statement that if Duverger's law is true and the theory is appropriate, sophisticated voting must occur (hypothetical). Changing topics slightly, Riker looks at Nigeria who has adopted plurality voting (electoral systems in which a candidate who polls more than any other is elected). His overall conclusion to the effect of Duverger's law is that the future of the two party system, whether it is in pace or not, will prove to be a continuous study. However, Riker's reliance on historical information may overlook contemporary dynamics, such as media and technology. This aside, the study's findings remain relevant for understanding the barriers in the two-party system, following the argument created in the paper.

#### **5. The Struggles of the Third Party**

In their 2019 case study, George Anthony and Arthur Carl used data from different elections in US history to conclude their findings in this case study by using meta-analysis. They came to the conclusion that two-party systems are preferred in many countries where the people elect representatives because it is seen to be easier to govern. This system is the one that is used by the US and countries like Jamaica, Malta, and many Latin American countries. Identified from this, the authors found that in democratic countries, multiple parties are a must for their political

systems. Going deeper into the logistics of two-party systems, the case study showed that in two-party systems, only one or two parties stand a chance and smaller, independent parties almost never win. The authors also concluded that many countries' party system depends on their socio-economic state and additionally the state of their culture. Sometimes because of this, multi-party systems can lead to anarchy, Anthony and Carl wrote, however, two-party systems discourage these radical minor parties. George Anthony and Arthur Carl additionally found that in the U.S.'s history, no third party candidate has come close to winning the presidency. For example, the case study highlights that Hilary Clinton won the popular vote over Trump in 2016 but Trump won the electoral college, ultimately meaning he won the presidency. The writers realized that some people argue that the electoral college should not decide the winner but rather the people, but on the other side people argue that the electoral college represents unrepresented people, according to the authors. The case study believes that this has been because their beliefs and views have always been overshadowed by the major parties that have more funding and more resources than independent candidates (Anthony, 2019). Overall, the case study concludes that the judgment of these situations brings more division to the culture in the US and provides for further internal conflict. The case study from 2019 highlighted the detours that third-party candidates have to face and the difference of winning the popular vote compared to the electoral college, yet its focus on historical data limits its applicability to our society's political landscape. Still, their findings underscore the systemic challenges faced by third parties, showing the need for reforms further.

## **6. How the Two-Party System Corrupts in Our Own Government**

Alper Tolga Bulut in his 2018 study explored the effect that the party system has on Congress and concluded that people in Congress are bound by their roll call votes to follow their party beliefs to a tee. Bulut (2018) looked at the congress side of foreign policy in the USA's legislature, aiming to uncover the party effect within the United States government. Bulut noted that many other studies that looked into this issue looked at roll-call votes. Because of this, he decided to focus on studying expert surveys to determine party effect rather than what many others did. On top of this, Bulut realized that many different factors go into uncovering the party effect so he had to look at many different aspects to come to a finite conclusion. After examining many different research papers like his, Bulut noticed that many did not have the statistical evidence to back their claims. He decided that statistical evidence would help his claim stand out among the rest. Delving into the party effect itself, Bulut had to look at different methods of measuring it. The first method he looked at was Quasi experimental design which is the most reliable technique to reveal the party effect (Bulut, 2018). Bulut described that this experimental design allows the researcher to isolate all other variables that might affect the findings within the research. However, he notes that it is hard to come up with a valid control group and there is limited application when it comes to this experimental design. Like Bulut said before, he reiterates that looking at expert surveys, Bulut's method, is an alternative method that is used in European politics. Now, looking at expert surveys as a method, you can create a questionnaire for the questions you want answered throughout your research rather than a wide range of topics that will not end up being used. You are able to ask scholars in the field that you are studying to place the parties on a scale to see where the party effect is. Bulut notes that this information is more credible and reliable because these are experts that study the topic you are researching. The major downside to this method that Bulut realized is that respondents may have bias because they are randomly selected. Overall though, Bulut believes that this is the best experimental method to measure party effect in US Congress. Bulut's conclusion is that through using expert surveys to look at the US Congress, it enables researchers to see the problem from a different angle and with different data. Bulut investigates the party effect in the U.S. Congress revealing how roll-call votes often reflect party loyalty. While Bulut's use of surveys provides different insights, response bias could limit the study's credibility. Even then, the study highlights the influence of party dynamics on legislative behavior.

Danielle M. Thomsen (2021) demonstrates a meta-data analysis in a research study about how money affects elections. Thomsen started by supporting a broader concept of a political candidate that makes them more than just a ballot. As known, candidates campaign for months prior to the election. Many times, on-ballot measures hide who all is running for office from our view. Thomsen notes that dropouts help us comprehend campaign dynamics better when it leads up to the election in November. The dramatic increase in dropouts over time highlights their growing relevance.

Thomsen (2021) did not think that this was just coincidence but there was a bigger cause. Her findings give support to concerns that money has a negative influence in US elections. The lack of money is a huge reason that many smaller candidates can not stand a chance against some of the bigger candidates. Now that many campaigns are spending big time money to get their name and face everywhere, Thomsen emphasizes that the struggle for smaller candidates to be heard is so much harder. Additionally, candidates increasingly drop out of the presidential race when they fail to raise money which ultimately causes voters to have a shortage of candidates to choose from (Thomsen, 2021). After looking at many other systems, Thomsen concluded that having fewer candidates for voters to elect is consistent in a system where there is a predetermined winner. Thomsen notes that this is a cause for concern in an era where elections are not competitive. She concludes that if it wasn't for the strict party system, many candidates would be able to continue in their campaign and show their policies rather than their wealth. However, her focus on federal elections overlook state and local dynamics which could lead to missed issues with potential solutions. Yet, Thomsen's findings still examine the critical need for campaign finance reform to equal the opportunity for all candidates.

## 7. Discussion

### 7.1 Introduction

From 1861 to 1865, America faced itself in the Civil War. Now, it is the 20th century and it is looking as if our society is heading back in the other direction. Looking at why the Civil War happened, the issue at hand was the rights of states compared to those of the new government and the legality of slavery. States in the North wanted to, mostly, abolish slavery and have a more powerful centralized government. On the other hand, the South wanted to keep slavery as it was a major part of their economy and they wanted the states to hold more power than the central government to prevent the overuse of power. Why did these issues evolve into a bigger conflict that inflicted a mass loss of life in the United States? Well, when people have polar opposite views on powerful subjects, it does not take much for them to resort to violence to "win" the fight. That was almost 200 years ago but America is beginning to see the same tendencies again. The South during the Civil War lynched people of color which ultimately exemplified their side of keeping slavery legal. Today, people are being killed, attacked, and mentally and physically assaulted because of sex, race, and gender all for the main reason of getting a point across. The inability of the Democratic and Republican parties to compromise continues many societal issues, such as the border crisis, where short-term measures fail to address long-term challenges. Per Amy Howe on SCOTUSblog, many of President Bidens' propositions like student debt forgiveness have been met in Congress without support and failed to become a working program. When *Biden v. Nebraska* was heard by the Supreme Court of the United States, the case was ruled six to three with the conclusion that the Biden Administration "overstepped" their power with their \$400 billion in student loans. Chief Justice John Roberts wrote for the court during this trial and claimed that the decision was based on a straightforward interpretation of the federal law. Additionally, the idolization of presidential candidates creates a "rivalry" instead of a friendship. While the Founding Fathers wanted a government made by the people, systemic flaws in their framework have caused the original purpose to go off the tracks. When looking at the struggling economy and the struggling society, how can it be said that there are no issues? There has been no political progression since the Founding Fathers' vision. There is no progression in our government because they cannot compromise and fix issues that are only going to continue hurting our country. It seems that a lot of political issues and arguments stem from recent elections. Our electoral system consists of the two-party system and the electoral college, both outdated and not serving their intended purpose, equality. The Electoral College allows candidates to win without the popular vote. It prioritizes swing states and leaves others unrepresented. This systemic flaw causes a fall in public trust with the democratic process. While some argue that the Electoral College still protects small states, evidence suggests it disproportionately affects certain regions at the disadvantage of others. Thus, the Electoral College creates inequities. In the 2016 election, Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by nearly 2.9 million votes but lost the presidency due to the Electoral College. This highlights how the system disproportionately supports the influence of smaller states at the expense of larger ones.

Similarly, concerns about the complexity of ranked-choice voting are brought up because of the "success" and lack of failure that our two-party system has proven. However, as discussed throughout the paper, the two-party system

is beginning to fall from its original purpose. It is no longer unifying but rather polarizing. The lack of support for a change in system can be mitigated through voter education programs that teach both positives and negatives of new systems, as well as gradual implementation of such systems. The countries that share our system are mainly Latin American countries like Jamaica and Malta who are fighting to continue staying afloat. Why can our society not evolve too? There are outdated principles in our voting system like the two-party system and the electoral college due to the lack of relevance of their initial purpose. However, ranked-choice voting could address many of these flaws. For example, in Maine's 2018 congressional election, ranked-choice voting allowed Jared Golden to win despite not leading in the first round of votes. This voting system ensured that the winner had majority support, contrasting with the winner-takes-all outcomes of the two-party system caused by the Electoral College. In order to preserve the ideals of the Founding Fathers and prevent a repeat of history, these principles need to be subject to change.

## 7.2 The Two-Party System: The Cause of the US's Divide

The two-party system creates divisions in government and society. Haleem (2020) highlights how the Electoral College fosters public dismay, as seen in the emotionally charged 2020 election. Haleem finds that in some cases, there could be violence if the electoral college does not fairly represent the people's vote, which further highlights the systemic issues in the electoral college. Carrying on, the polarization of these two candidates started not only during the election cycle, but elections prior to this. For example, when Obama faced John McCain, many Americans polarized Obama from McCain because there was a fear that Obama would put extreme gun laws in place. This polarization because of gun rights was the sole reason for many Americans' votes. In the 2016 election, candidates like Hilary Clinton, who won the popular vote, did not win the presidential election. How could someone who wins the votes of the majority of the nation not become the president? The answer is the outdated electoral college. This "college" of representatives was formed originally to keep uneducated farmers in the 1800's from having the right to vote, as they were not educated on political issues. However, that is not the case in our day and age. Haleem found that a popular criticism in the way the president is elected is that they are not technically chosen by the people as a whole but by the people who live in states that matter. Equal representation does not seem to apply to the US in elections, although that is what the Founding Fathers envisioned. If our country continues down this slippery slope without change, another international conflict is bound to arise. Haleem's research compiled data of three separate outcomes for the 2020 election. First, a peaceful transfer of power. The next one was a situation in which Donald Trump, the president at the time, prematurely declares victory and the transfer of power is not peaceful. Finally, Haleem concluded that there was an ugly solution in which people rioted based on their extreme opinions of who truly won the election (Haleem, 2020). The final two came into fruition with the events on January 6th, when the Capitol of the United States was stormed in a non-peaceful protest of the actual president. There has been so much growth since the Constitution was set in place. Places like New York City, Los Angeles, and Orlando have experienced complete modernization that would have never have been dreamed of with the technology when our government was established. If there has been this much change, shouldn't our government have changed in correlation with them? Looking back in history, Thomas Jefferson used the implied powers of the President that are found in the Constitution to conduct the Louisiana Purchase. Now, many presidents create executive orders like the withdrawing from Afghanistan that use these same implied powers. These implied powers may need to be considered for revision or at least be moderated along with other outdated aspects of the government. Change needs to happen in the United States and it starts with the voting system. Too many conflicts have been started in the past decade over the presidency and nothing has been done during these presidencies to fix issues like immigration because there is never any compromise. If our leaders want a country that the Founding Fathers strove for, they need to act like they know what they are doing and do it, not fight over it.

If our country looks at how other countries compare to us, beneficial changes would be clearly seen. In Peter Emerson's (2021) comparison of different electoral systems, he compares how the US's voting system would change, for worse or for better, by using data from other countries' governments. Emerson concluded in his research that the most successful voting system results in a singular candidate winning the election rather than multiple candidates to stray away from altercations. Off to a good start, right? The United States follows a system in which one person wins

the election and gains the title of the president. But what about the Congress? How come they are able to make sure the president has a hard time getting anything done? Well maybe our country is not off to a good start. Carrying on, when comparing our country further, Emerson found that in all governments there is a threshold that is required to gain office. The United States holds a threshold of almost 50% (270/538). No wonder there is conflict when it comes to elections. When there is a 50/50 threshold, there will always be two distinct sides of the political race. In order to lessen some of our conflict, the government should look for ways to unify the people more and lessen the gap from 50/50 to a place where it is visible our society is agreeing more. Emerson's credibility on this study comes from his work observing 20+ elections for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. By looking and comparing other countries' elections, Emerson made his own proposal as to why other systems work better compared to the United States. The other systems have changed according to the change in their society (Emerson, 2021). Other countries have learned from their mistakes. Other countries prepare for the future of their country, unlike the United States. The US is a "now" acting government, but is falling behind countries like China and Russia. China's economy is now seen as the best in the world and many of the United State's goods are "made in China". Additionally, Russia's connections with other superpowers, like China and North Korea, make them a bigger threat to our safety and the world's safety. If acting now is not working, should it not be changed? If our electoral system is not working, should it not be changed?

Let us look at changes happening on a local level in our own country and see if they can be applied on a higher scale. On November 12, 2023, Andrew Roth wrote a local paper about different systems that are being adapted locally in Michigan political elections. The system that is highlighted is a ranked voting system. The ranked voting system takes many different candidates and it takes them from various different standpoints, not just Democratic and Republican. This is unlike our current election system because there are two distinct major parties in the US. Ranked-choice voting uses majority support by allowing voters to rank their candidates by preference. This opens opportunities for third-party candidates and reduces polarization. The candidate that gains the least amount of first choice votes gets eliminated. The first place votes for the removed candidate would go to the voters' second choice and the process would continue until a candidate has at least 50% support from the remaining votes (Roth, 2023). This system allows for voters to get the best possible chance of someone gaining office they support. Additionally, it opens up the presidential race to more than two candidates. Why can there be 10+ different flavors of soda at a gas station but only two candidates to hold the fate of the country for 4+ years? If there are more options for government, there will eventually be shared interests. In our current system, the two candidates are almost always polar opposites. The hope of a ranked voting system is that people can agree on shared interests which will support the ideals of more than 50% of the nation. However, one county clerk concluded that now is not the right time for a voting switch. He notes that with the addition of mail-in ballots and different ways to vote, Michigan voters should not have to adapt to a completely new voting system on top of that. What this county clerk does not realize is that there has never been change in our voting system this large so it will be new to everyone. The change from no masks to masks during the pandemic was large, but it was large because the world had never seen something like it before. The precautions taken during this change helped more people than not be saved from getting the virus. Similarly, a change in the voting system would more times than not help the country with their relation to their own citizens and likewise.

### 7.3 Duverger's Law: Science Behind Two Parties

When viewing the two-party system under a smaller lens, different parts that make the whole are able to be studied individually. For one, there is a political science involved in every political system, including the two-party system. This science is known as Duverger's Law. This law is popular in the field of political science. The law states that in political systems where there is one winner (the US's), two main parties emerge while minor parties take smaller vote totals. In the United States, the two main parties, Republican and Democratic, emerge and one of the main candidates wins the presidential election. The media, people, government leaders, and economy are all contributing factors in America during this political process. Ziegfeld describes the different mechanisms that are a part of Duverger's Law. Some mechanisms are used to identify the major party in a system and to create minor parties which take some power away from the major party. This was the vision of our Founding Fathers. To ensure no majority had an overarching

power, there were to be checks and balances that would counteract their power. However, now that 200 years have progressed, nothing has changed since then, however the majorities and the minorities have. Taking this science to the real world, to analyze the US's system, Ziegfeld compares it with a similar system, India's. Ziegfeld found that India's party system is based on Duverger's Law as well. He described that just like many people endorse candidates in the US, people called elites "endorse" candidates in India (Ziegfeld, 2020). These elites play a major part in Indian elections according to Ziegfeld. Powerful people are able to use their voice and platform to sway the opinions of the voter. This was not a check and balance that the Founding Fathers thought of. The use of social media to attack candidates or endorse candidates has evolved the election drastically. When looking back in history, the use of television to publicly broadcast the FACE of the candidates allowed for voters to have a more real connection with the potential next president. In today's age, Presidents like Donald Trump and Joe Biden take advantage of platforms like X to share information about their ideas and progress. However, there has not been a check or balance to counteract the effect that new technology is playing in our elections. Additionally, Ziegfeld made the comparison that many mechanisms of Duverger's Laws play roles in both India and the US's systems. A country that is an entire ocean away is struggling under the same system that the US is struggling under. There has to be a connection. The connection is that even though economies are evolving, like India's bolstering economy, and societies are evolving, like the growth of India's population, the governments of the country are not evolving. Politics is a SYSTEM. When parts of a system change, the whole system needs to change unless it wants to fail. By not changing all parts in our political system, the US is showing that it wants its election system to fail.

Our government has failed before and the history of the United States shows it. William H. Riker (1982), in a quantitative analysis, surveyed the history of Duverger's law to show that a history does exist for it. Riker concluded that the winning candidate favors the two party system because it is easier to win the election. Drawbacks that the winning candidate faces is the lack of options for candidates. There can ultimately be only two main candidates, one from each major party, once it comes to November so the chances to be one of those two are slim. However, this plays into the benefits as well. If the candidates running are already well known and established, most other candidates would have dropped out and they will, more likely than not, have an easy path into being their party's presidential candidate. In the two-party system, there are only two candidates that face off for the presidency after the Primaries conclude. This makes the race essentially a 1v1. You have a 50/50 shot of winning the election. Because of these chances, the winning candidates favor this system/process because once they become their parties' candidate, they have an easier shot at the presidency than if they had to campaign against 5+ candidates. In what world is that fair? Why should only two people have the chance to control the United States for at least four years? Carrying on, Riker describes that since the first enunciation by Droop, Duverger's law has been engraved in the rational choice theory that describes the behavior of both politicians and voters (Riker, 1982). This history shows that political science has a more significant effect in elections than many people realize or quite frankly know about. Maybe the fault of our system is that people are not educated enough on how the system works. If you are going to be a part of a functional system, you should know every little detail about it because when it breaks, you will be able to fix it. Obviously, the citizens of the US do not because the system is not being fixed. Changing topics slightly, Riker looks at Nigeria who has adopted plurality voting (electoral systems in which a candidate who polls more than any other is elected). In this system, there is a chance for many different candidates to win the office and it is easier for the voter to elect who they actually want to be their "leader". In the United States, you only have two options. You may agree with most of what one says, but disagree at the same time. However, you still are going to vote for that candidate because "at least it isn't the other one". Why should there be settling? A plurality voting system would widen the choices so that citizens can choose who they actually want and not have to settle for the next-best option.

#### 7.4 The Struggles of the Third Party

Harping on the point that there are not enough options for citizens to choose from, the third party candidates in US elections are overshadowed by wealth and name-value. In their 2019 case study, George Anthony and Arthur Carl used data from different elections in US history to conclude that two-party systems are preferred in many countries where the people elect representatives because it is seen to be easier to govern. However, the ease of use does not



account for the fact that it polarizes the people. The two-party system has opposing views that foster polarization. This polarization in society affects social situations and the government's effective function. This system is the one that is used by the US and countries like Jamaica, Malta, and many Latin American countries. They use it because it is EASIER for them. If only holding the fate of hundreds of millions of US citizens was easy. Governing the complex society of the United States should not be easy. Being the president should not be an easy job. That is why not just everyone can become president. But, in today's age, it is starting to feel like anyone can become the president. Going deeper into the logistics of two-party systems, the case study showed that in two-party systems, only one or two parties stand a chance and smaller, independent parties almost never win (Anthony, 2019). George Anthony and Arthur Carl additionally found that in the U.S's history, no third party candidate has come close to winning the presidency. Third-party candidates are excluded from meaningful participation. Historical data shows that no third-party candidate has surpassed 19% of the popular vote since Theodore Roosevelt in 1912 (Anthony, 2019). More recently, in the 2020 election, third-party candidates only received 1.7% of the vote. The elimination of the third party candidate is not fair. Main candidates get the spotlight in the media through the news and articles with their names and faces written all over it. Third-party candidates face systemic disadvantages due to limited media coverage and uneven funding. These issues make it impossible to compete with the major-party candidates and their campaigns. This is mainly because of their socioeconomic status. Many third party candidates cannot afford the extravagant campaigns of billionaire politicians. This is a flaw in the socioeconomic portion of our election system. Yet again, another piece of our whole is broken. Additionally, many third-party candidates do not get as much notability or coverage as candidates who have name-sake value. For example, Donald Trump, originally a businessman, is a billionaire who has the capability to pay for huge campaigns and rallies. Also, his appearances in his earlier life on TV shows has increased his name value. However, the president is not just a title. The presidential race is not a popularity contest. But right now, it is. The president can affect the country and the world gravely with just one mistake, so our candidates should have experience with that pressure rather than being new-comers. The separation in funding and representation that main parties have over third parties creates a mountain that is impossible to climb over if you are a third-party candidate. During this election cycle, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. is running as a third-party candidate. RFK Jr. was seen all throughout the news because of his strong opinions during this election cycle. However, now that it grows closer to the election, it feels that his platform has been shadowed and he has not been highlighted like Donald Trump and Joe Biden. This causes a bigger divide in the US. Many people decide to not vote at all because their number one option does not stand a chance against the Democrat candidate and the Republican candidate. There is a problem within our election system that causes an unfair advantage for main party candidates which ultimately takes away from the ability for the US voters to vote how they want to.

#### 7.5 How the Two-Party System Corrupts in Our Own Government

Politicians in our own government are affected and corrupted by the manipulation that the two-party system brings with it. There have been many bribery allegations and offenses for senators and representatives in our government like the U.S. Senator Robert Menendez. This bribery offense was connected to bipartisan agreements in Egypt. Alper Tolga Bulut in his 2018 study explored the effect that the party system has on Congress and concluded that people in Congress are binded by their roll call votes to follow their party beliefs to a tee. Bulut finds data that shows a skewing in voting over the years that has caused more and more people in Congress to vote how the rest of their party does. This has been tied to these politicians wanting to be reelected and voting based on how they can gain more support rather on what is right. This is corruption at its finest. The people that are supposed to be representing us are looking out for their best interests and not the rest of the countries. There can never be any leeway in the government because the politicians stick purely to their party. At State of the Union addresses, when the president states something that improved the country, only their party applauds. Why can't both parties be happy about improvement? It is because each party wants to improve the country more. They fight to "win" in improving but when they fight, the things that truly need improvement never do. Going on, Bulut saw no statistical evidence that looks at the effect the party system has in government, Bulut's goal was to find those missing stats. Bulut's method is an alternative method that is used in European politics. He created questionnaires for the questions he wanted answered in the US government (Bulut,

2018). His goal is to ask people in government these questions and use the survey results to find statistics on how the party system affects politicians. The major downside to this method that Bulut realized is that respondents may have bias because they are randomly selected. The issue trying to be solved is the bias that politicians have. They are biased to always vote for their party because they are “representatives”. They are in it for the money and if they do not vote how the people electing them want them to, they will not be reelected. With this comes the never ending cycle of nothing getting done in government. There are rarely any compromises and it is never on important issues that keep harming the United States like immigration and human rights.

Wealth disparities in elections influence electoral outcomes. Well-funded campaigns dominate smaller campaigns in media coverage and voter outreach. Danielle M. Thomsen (2021) demonstrates a meta-data analysis about how money affects elections. Thomsen started by supporting a broader concept of a political candidate that makes them more than just a ballot. As it stands now, ads and news articles ultimately create our opinions on candidates for us. Whether the information is fake or not, the people latch onto it to create their opinions. These opinions automatically eliminate certain candidates as potential choices for them. Because of this elimination, the health of our democracy gets worse because there becomes less and less potential candidates until there are eventually only two, and in our case that is Donald Trump and Joe Biden. As known, candidates campaign for months prior to the election. Many times, on-ballot measures hide who all is running for office from our view. This blockage denotes the tiring effort that many smaller candidates put into their campaigns. The candidates usually drop out of the election because they are overshadowed by the “bigger” candidates that receive the media coverage that they do not always deserve. They receive this media coverage however because it makes the news outlets money. The election has turned into a money making event rather than the catalyst for politics in America. Thomsen notes that dropouts help us comprehend campaign dynamics better when it leads up to the election in November. The dramatic increase in dropouts over time highlights their growing relevance. Thomsen (2021) did not think that this was just coincidence but there was a bigger cause. As mentioned before, the lack of money is the main reason that many smaller candidates can not stand a chance against some of the bigger candidates. Now that many campaigns are spending big time money to get their name and face everywhere, Thomsen emphasizes that the struggle for smaller candidates to be heard is so much harder. For example, in the 2020 election, Joe Biden and Donald Trump each raised over \$1 billion, while Libertarian candidate Jo Jorgensen raised just \$3.8 million. That is 0.38% of what the head candidates spent. If there is not an equal amount of representation, our own citizens will only see the two main faces like always. They will never get a chance to really see other candidates. Talk about the land of the free, but how does this use of money to shield citizens from seeing every view on our government emphasize freedom. It is borderline censorship. This causes voters to have fewer candidates to choose from (Thomsen, 2021). After looking at many other systems, Thomsen concluded that having fewer candidates for voters to elect from is consistent in a system where there is a predetermined winner. Our elections have been argued to be scripted and rigged over the past years. Although there is no real evidence to show this fully, the government definitely has a say in who or who not should be shown on the news, in media, and in advertisements. Thomsen notes that this is a cause for concern in an era where elections are not competitive. The people of the United States are the farthest separated they have ever been since the Civil War. Although this may seem like a bold claim, there is prudent evidence that shows the reality of this. For example, found by Bruce Stokes, associate fellow for the US and the Americas Programmes, data shows that 23% of Americans support their own state leaving the Union. That is almost one-fourth of our entire country that wants to leave the unity of our society. The Civil War started for a variety of reasons and one being the dispute over the use and legality of slavery. This topic had polar views and it could not be compromised on. Like this situation, the US people can not compromise on how to deal with the immigrant problem, involvement in foreign affairs like Ukraine's, and rights of the people like the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. There are two sides and they are polar opposites. If more sides are added along with different viewpoints that share similarities from both sides, then there will not be polar opposites and there can be agreement.

## 7.6 Practical Reforms

Possible reforms for certain issues can be made through the research gathered throughout the paper. For one, there can be reform to the Electoral College. This could include transitioning to a national popular vote. This vote would

align presidential elections with the majority's will, reducing perceived injustices and carrying out the Founding Fathers "all men are created equal" ideal. Furthermore, reform could come to our voting system. Looking at other countries' systems, ranked-choice voting stood out as extremely successful. If we would expand this system nationwide, it would create a larger appeal for voters on many different candidates, rather than just two that we see in current elections. Finally, we can look to reform the finances within campaign trails. We could implement caps on campaign spending and public financing which could level the playing field for third-party candidates who are outmatched when it comes to funding their ideas and viewpoints in campaigning. Although there could be more reform to our system, too much at once would cause unrest in our society. This is why this paper proposes smaller changes to resolve the bigger issue.

## 8. Conclusion

Everyday, people see headlines on the news about violence, civil right issues, and economic issues. These headlines fuel the opinions of the voter in hopes that these issues will be solved. However, the opinions of the US voters are opposites which do not allow for compromise. The issue in America is the party system that polarizes the people's opinions. Through the review of various academic sources, the conclusion can be made that there are better systems out there to fix the systemic issue in our country's very own system. Not only do these better systems like preferential voting account for the polarization of the people, but it also accounts for the unfair advantages that are seen throughout our government. To continue improving our own election system, researchers should continue to compare and contrast other countries' systems to ours and use what could benefit our system.

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