

**The Never Ending Cycle of American Politics**

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POLSC 121: Introduction to American Government

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July 13, 2022

## Abstract

On its surface, the 2020 election between Trump and Biden represented two different Americas – one pushing a conservative agenda and the other a liberal one. Americans across the nation were more divided than ever, clashing on issues related to individual rights, race, the economy, and the environment. Democrats supported the leftist and more moderate Biden, and Republicans supported right-wing and nationalistic Trump. However, if one looked closer, they would realize that both candidates ultimately upheld the political and economic status quo of capitalism and corruption. In the environment of contemporary politics, we are stuck in a never-ending cycle where the privileged and wealthy hold the true power, and the general population are burdened with increasing inequality while being fed lies that they can achieve the “American Dream.” Though there are some third-party candidates that push a new status quo, it will remain the same so long as politicians benefit from the concentration of wealth and power. This paper argues that no matter who is in office – Trump, Biden, or another political figure – the wealthy elite exert disproportionate influence in the government to push their own agenda and reap the benefits of policies put forward by the two major parties, a key factor that encourages them to keep the status quo in place.

## **The Never Ending Cycle of American Politics**

After a campaign championing “Make America Great Again,” an impeachment, a pandemic, the end of a 20-year long war in Afghanistan, the beginning of war with Russia, and the controversial overturning of Roe vs. Wade, it is safe to say that the past eight years have been a political roller-coaster ride under two competing presidents.

This paper examines the degree to which the political and economic status quo of the United States has changed under the leadership of President Biden, arguing that despite the divide between the Democrat and Republican party, the status quo has not changed because the government prioritizes policies that benefit the wealthy elite of the nation. My analysis relies on a study of the history of the democratic system, the liberal and conservative visions that Trump and Biden put forward, as well as a study of the political science theory that best describes the modern American political and economic status quo.

### **History & Traditional Interpretations of Democracy**

The United States is believed to be the world’s greatest democracy. Foreigners envision a shining city on the hill, immigrants can only hope to achieve the “American Dream” of liberty, and Americans themselves believe that the United States is the most powerful empire to ever exist. The United States is built on a foundation promoting individual rights, economic freedom, and equality for all, a set of ideals centered on the prosperity of all its citizens. Unfortunately, this democratic utopia is misleading. Much to the detriment of the average American, democracy and capitalism play hand in hand when referring to the American political system. As author Heineman wrote, “Representative government and capitalism developed together in the United States, and many Americans tend to equate democracy, a political system in which people govern themselves, with capitalism.” (Heineman, 1995). Another author wrote that “The

American-style democracy is a rich man's game based on capital and is fundamentally different from democracy of the people" (The State...2021). Unbeknownst to many, the US is built on a history of myths and lies all with the aim of making profit (slavery, imperialism, and an unprecedented record of waging war in all parts of the world). Thus, it is important to understand the history of how this form of government was forged as well as its significance in the modern and postmodern globalized world.

The first recorded democracy in human history originated in Athens, an ancient Greek city-state. Spanning all the way back to the 5th century BC, this civilization was categorized as a direct democracy in which members of society – particularly men – could vote on laws surrounding war, foreign policy, and criminal punishment (Trinidad...2022). The Athenian democratic system would be a model for the Founding Fathers who drafted the US Constitution and set the premises for the United States government.

Centuries after the Greek city-states, the Magna Carta was issued in medieval Europe during the age of monarchies and feudalism. This document represented a key change to the European system of monarchy, and according to historians, it was the first document to establish that the sovereign of a country was not above the law. This document placed limits to the power of the monarch and led to the creation of parliaments, a feature that carried on to modern democracies. In 1215, the year that this document was enacted, democratic governments were still scarce, but they would slowly begin to emerge in Europe following the Enlightenment period and the American Revolution – and thinkers would reference the Magna Carta to support their movements (Magna Carta...2021).

Perhaps the most critical period that led to the emergence of the Western democracies was the Enlightenment period. Events throughout history from the ancient Greek philosophers to

the undertaking of the Renaissance and Scientific Revolution contributed to the inception of this movement. They all emphasized an individualistic and objective view of the world, and in the 17th and 18th centuries, thinkers tried to apply these ideas to all aspects of society in the form of reason, observation, and science. Dubbed the “Age of Reason,” Enlightenment thinkers such as Locke, Hobbes, and Voltaire advocated that all human beings had the right to life, liberty, and property. Voltaire argued in favor of freedom of speech and religion. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, another Enlightenment thinker, contended that people were bound by a social contract where they gave up some of their own freedom to live in an orderly society where the government protected the rights of all citizens. Others went on to write about topics ranging from the branches of government to the role of women in society (Enlightenment, 2020). Influenced by the Magna Carta, some took the first step towards a democracy, arguing that the government’s power came from the people and not from the absolute ruler.

The Enlightenment period ushered in a series of sweeping reforms, greatly influencing the American Revolution. A factor that led to the establishment of the United States of America was an increasing sense of nationalism and American pride in the colonies, contributing to a want to split off from the British Empire. Enlightenment ideals of separation of powers, the social contract, and natural rights further fueled this movement. Arguably the greatest factor that caused the revolution was an economic motive: The British enacted high taxes on American citizens and imposed trade restrictions (eg. Stamp Act, Boston Tea Party). With the influence of capitalist ideas of a free economy encouraged by Adam Smith, many wanted to split off from Britain and establish their own democratic society (Stearns, 2011). This revolution was a success, and the US Declaration of Independence was drafted by America’s founding fathers based on the principles of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

The newly established American democracy was a modern political system of governance where elected government representatives were expected to listen to the voice of the people and held accountable for their actions. This government was closely intertwined with the economic system of capitalism. Defined as an “economic system in which private actors own and control property in accord with their interests, and demand and supply freely set prices in markets in a way that can serve the best interests of society,” the main function of this system is to produce individual profit with little to no government interference, all in the name of self-interest (Jahan, 2015). This economic policy was foundational to America’s democratic society. Individuals made profit by pursuing their own interests and ideas, and corporations were able to thrive and grow off of the opportunity of free international trade. Different events in American history challenged and contributed to the strengthening of this capitalist society. The United States emerged as the world’s strongest nation after WWII – leading in both economic GDP and military – because of the profit different industries were able to make by selling weapons, food, and other materials. At the same time, during challenging times like the Great Depression, the government had to step in and pass deals financially supporting those that experienced job loss and poverty. There were challenges to balancing a democratic society with an economic system of capitalism, and unfortunately this effort is becoming more difficult over time. Capitalism inherently emphasizes the wealth of the individual, and so the line between money and political power invariably become blurred.

Now that we have covered the history of democracy and the values that the US puts forth – especially with relation to our economic status quo – we can examine the platforms and policies Trump and Biden advocated for in the 2020 presidential election and determine the degree of influence these candidates had on the status quo of the nation.

## **The 2020 Election: A Businessman and Politician**

In order to answer the question of how different our political and economic status quo is now that Biden and the Democrats have won the executive branch, an analysis of the current political climate in the country as well as a comparison of the different positions Joe Biden and Donald Trump have taken on policy issues is necessary.

The political climate in the US has become increasingly polarized over the past few decades. America has divided itself into blue and red, Democrats versus Republicans, and it is said that America has never been more divided since the Civil War as it is now. One of the largest driving factors of this growing partisanship is a new sense of tribalism and extremism on issues relating to social justice and the economy. One professor wrote, “It’s not just that people only trust or associate with their own side... It’s that they’re contemptuous of the other side, whom they see as other and less moral – an existential threat” (Finkel, 2022). Political affiliation, like religion and race, now comprise American tribal identity. Recently, some researchers have gone so far as to say that this rift between the left and right has become so extreme that “the United States... may be at a point of no return.” Another professor argued that if we continue down this path, “we cannot unite even in the face of war, climate change, pandemics, or other challenges to the survival of our society” (Karlis, 2021).

This partisanship culminated into one of the most inharmonious presidential elections. According to Pew Research Center, “The 2020 presidential election further highlighted these deep-seated divides.” Statistics showed that “roughly eight-in-ten registered voters in both camps said their differences with the other side were about core American values, and roughly nine-in-ten – again in both camps – worried that a victory by the other would lead to ‘lasting harm’ to the United States” (Dimock, 2020). The 2020 election between Republican President Donald Trump

and Democrat President Joe Biden forced voters to choose between two candidates with drastically different approaches and views on American domestic issues. This paper will next examine the different policies Trump and Biden campaigned for, as well as the image they project in the news and media.

President Trump's views on domestic issues align with his party's platform: Trump is pro-life, he advocates for gun rights, he opposes illegal immigration (and wanted to build a wall along the border between the US and Mexico), and he also cut taxes for corporations and individuals. Biden, on the other hand, is pro-choice, he advocates for gun control policies, he wants to legalize undocumented immigrants, and he strives to raise taxes (Donald Trump...n.d.). Trump and Biden also have opposing views on issues relating to the environment and the American healthcare system. Regarding US foreign policy and defense spending, both candidates have similar stances – they both supported the war in the Middle East at least in part, they both oppose China and Russia but want to maintain good relations for economic purposes, and they also both allow significant spending for the defense department.

Trump and Biden project different images – one is a businessman and the other a politician. A lot of Americans understandably think it would be better to have a businessman than a politician as president because of Trump's straightforwardness and charisma. He has many qualities that appeal to the masses: "He's a big man, he's a comfortable speaker who looks more at ease on stage than most politicians, he projects power, and he never seems ruffled... you cannot shame him. He can speak extemporaneously to audiences of thousands for hours at a time, and he's extremely good at delivering simple messages with memorable language. He can joke around on one hand and emasculate an opponent on the other. America has been in love with outlaws since its early days, and leaders like Trump who seem to achieve power while



flouting the rules of decorum exert a kind of magnetic pull” (Ryan, 2020). Trump also emphasizes American exceptionalism – he parroted “Make America Again.” Unlike politicians, Trump escapes the filters by honestly speaking to American citizens about what he believes. On the other hand, many American citizens believe that Trump’s vote into office during the 2016 election reflected poorly on the people who comprise this nation, reflecting the “ugliness in America’s soul.” In one article, Parsi sarcastically wrote “Almost eight million more Americans voted for Trump this past Tuesday than they did in 2016. They saw the divisions he fueled, the xenophobia he embraced, the children he caged, the white supremacists he refused to condemn, and the pandemic he bungled; and they weighed that against the tax cuts they won, the conservative Supreme Court judges he appointed, the climate chaos they can ignore, and the punishments he inflicted on the ‘liberal elites’. They decided they wanted four more years of Trump” (Parsi, 2020). In contrast to Trump, Biden projects an image similar to most politicians – he acts more poised and respectful – although this is both a positive and negative characteristic.

Overall, studying the political divide in this nation and the opposing positions Biden and Trump take on different domestic issues would lead one to believe that whenever a candidate for a new party takes the seat – in this case Biden’s 2020 election into office – the status quo will change along with it. However, this inference is misleading and plainly incorrect.

Dubbed as the “Propaganda Model” by authors Herman and Chomsky, this paper argues that mainstream journalists are the largest contributors to the issue of image-making and political polarization in the country. One of the primary functions of news and media outlets is to serve as a “watchdog” against government abuses of power. They are supposed to educate Americans on all manner of topics in an unbiased manner. Unfortunately, the media has strayed far from its responsibility to objectively inform and protect. Journalists villainize certain politicians and

dishonestly cover certain new issues to serve the interests of the multinational corporations that fund them, and this is all to the detriment of the general population (Croteau, 1999). Even though news outlets like CNN and Fox make it look like Biden and Trump change the status quo and that one is better than the other, these media companies only want to fuel the blue versus red divide in the US to take attention away from foreign policy decisions that enrich the wealthy elite sector of the country (including Biden and Trump) or that elect their party into power. Thus, we arrive at our country's current predicament: at the end of the day, the political economic and political status quo has not changed under the Biden administration. It still maintains the cycle where the privileged holds the true power and the general population is burdened with inequality. The next section of this paper further explains this argument.

### **Hyperpluralism & the Status Quo**

The political and economic status quo of the United States has not changed now that Biden has won the 2020 election. My analysis relies on tools supplied by the political science theory of hyperpluralism and also a comparison of the international and domestic policies passed under the Trump and Biden administrations. I will first define hyperpluralism and its context in the American government; second, I will use the theory to explain why our status quo has not changed with reference to recent examples to back up my argument.

A truly democratic society is based on the will of the people. Every voice is heard, and the government's role is to try its best to enact laws and policies that support the success and equality of all its citizens – no one holds unfair power or influence over the government. Even though the US government upholds the core principles of a democracy, a closer look reveals that this is deceptive. Many intellectuals argue that the United States has moved away from a true democracy and is now a hyperpluralist society. What is hyperpluralism? As one article explains,

“In contrast to pluralism... hyperpluralism contends that when too many groups compete, and some groups come to exert greater power and influence than others, the political system grows so complex that governing of any sort becomes difficult. When one group is favored over others, democracy – rather than being served – is disrupted.” The author goes on to write that “in the context of hyperpluralism, the term ‘group’ is not a reference to political parties or racial, ethnic, cultural, or religious minority and majority opinions... Hyperpluralism is a reference to much smaller groups... who advocate for a single cause... or super PACs that represent a small number of people but get a disproportionate amount of attention because they wield considerable political influence” (Longley, 2021). Essentially, hyperpluralism is a democracy gone sour.

In the context of the US government – one that is divided into different socioeconomic classes – hyperpluralism explains that the upper wealthy classes and multinational corporations hold the vast majority of power. This extremely wealthy yet tiny sector of the population uses its money to influence political figures and government policies, and it forces political parties into the pockets of major corporations (Heineman, 1998). The US Congress is a good example of hyperpluralism at work: “As each member of Congress tries to satisfy the demands of many different groups such as lobbyists, PACs, and special interest groups, they are pulled in so many different directions that the resulting gridlock prevents action on anything but minor legislation. In focusing exclusively on individual groups, Congress often disregards the interests of the entire population” (Longley, 2021). This creates a cycle where the wealthy minority stays on top and the lower and middle class have very limited government influence, ultimately maintaining the status quo no matter who is in power. This erosion into a society of political hyperpluralism is enabled by the economic status quo and system of capitalism in the United States. As author Bloustein wrote, “Income and wealth inequality is a corrosive burr under the American saddle

not because, as so many on the left believe, our economy is rigged by shady billionaires and their Republican handmaidens, but because that is the nature of our freewheeling capitalist system and the genius of individual entrepreneurs... So why is capitalism so troublesome if the wealth it accrues is earned honestly, legally and without depriving others in unseemly ways? ... capitalists usually do not divide the pie in a fashion that keeps income and wealth gaps at tolerable levels, ensures real wage growth and economic mobility, and maintains public services so that the poor of today climb higher tomorrow” (Bloustein, 2019).

As our democracy has moved towards hyperpluralism, our status quo has stayed the same. Since America’s emergence as the world’s leading power after WWII, the United States has interfered in many countries with the goal of making an economic profit for larger industries. This paper will next provide real-world examples in contemporary US history that show regardless of who is in power, policies will remain the same with respect to issues that benefit powerful groups with significant influence on the government. In Latin America during the mid-1900s, the United States exerted its economic, political, and military strength in the region by overthrowing Guatemala’s democratic government and replacing it with a military dictatorship – why? United Fruit, a major American corporation that owned a substantial amount of land in Guatemala, used its power and influence within the US government to push for a coup. This was because Guatemala’s democratically elected president, Jacobo Arbenz, started programs of social reform that included the extensive redistribution of land previously occupied by United Fruit to the general population of Guatemalans. Despite United Fruit being a corporation independent from the government, the US intervened on its behalf. The CIA orchestrated a coup in which Jacobo Arbenz was replaced with a Guatemalan military dictatorship. This resulted in the oppression and murder of hundreds of thousands of Guatemalan citizens under a US-backed

dictator. This begs the question, does the US government stand for democracy when democracy threatens the economic interests of the American elite class? The documentary that reported this tragedy asked, “Why is it that massacres and torture were being carried out by a military backed by the US government? And with the support of our tax dollars? And why is it that a lot of the time we don't even know about it?” (In *Whose...2003*). This is a pattern that can be seen in many other parts of the world such as Vietnam, East Timor, and the Congo. In Palestine, the US provides the Israeli government more than \$4 billion per year in military assistance – according to statistics, this is more aid than any other country in the world receives from the US, including the entire continent of Africa. Why does the US give this much military support to Israel? The general American population has been led to believe that the government wants to maintain regional security and is supporting its fellow European allies; however, according to *Journeyman Pictures*, it is not “out of hatred to the Palestinians, they just have nothing to offer to the US. They have no power or wealth. In contrast, Israel is a rich advanced industrial society, military-based economy, tightly linked to the US. They have a lot to offer, and so they therefore ought to control the region according to the US – therefore no rights to the Palestinians” (In *Whose...2003*). These real-life examples display how economic power is very narrowly concentrated in a small corporate sector tightly linked to the government and media. Even in more recent times, both President Bush and President Obama – one Republican and the other Democrat – supported the “War on Terror.” These politicians told the American people they were countering terrorism; however, many argue that this war was actually waged for economic purposes. Considered to have been “privatized to a greater extent than any other war in history,” over 100,000 private contractors from US corporations like Blackwater, Halliburton, CACI, and Titan worked in Iraq, Kuwait, and the surrounding area to provide military support as well as

other forms of aid to the US military (Iraq for...2006). This war also granted the US access to large supplies of oil in the Middle East. To summarize, unbeknownst to the American population, the US engaged in a 20-year war in the Middle East – killing hundreds of thousands of lives – to accrue trillions of dollars for the wealthy elite class of the nation.

During the past year, President Biden's entrance into the presidential office has not changed the political and economic status quo either. For example, to the surprise of many Americans, Roe vs. Wade was overturned under President Biden's term in office – I say surprising because this is a policy that does not support the agenda of the liberal party. A central part of Biden's campaign was a pro-choice stance on abortion, but Roe vs. Wade, the legislation that protected a woman's right to abort, was overturned by the Supreme Court under his presidency. Similarly, the war on Ukraine shows how the US government has become a tool for major corporations and industries to increase their own economic profit, no matter who is in power. As author Carden suggested, "U.S. policy toward Putin's Russia remains driven by threat inflation, emotion and the duplicitous lobbying of various foreign interest groups on Capitol Hill, rather than a level-headed assessment of American national security interests" (Carden, 2021). Since the US and its NATO allies have countered Russia after its invasion on Ukraine, there have been dramatic economic impacts within the nation. The oil industry is making billions of dollars off of the war because of the US sanctions placed on Russia that have dramatically increased the price of oil in the West. The arms trade industry has also significantly benefited from the war. As in any military crisis that the US has started, weapons are being sold and bought in large quantities. Since American companies are the largest distributor of weapons in the entire world, this industry has made billions of dollars from the conflict with Russia.

This argument brings awareness to the grim truth surrounding the United States political system. Overwhelming wealth is handed to a very small minority that has significant influence over the government, and all of the historical examples above unveil how large companies represent the primary actors in international politics. It emphasizes the exploitative nature of the US democratic system – a cycle of enriching the rich. A lot of the time political figures themselves are deeply entrenched in this elusive money-making scheme. Not only are international conflicts orchestrated to benefit the rich, but the overturning of *Roe vs. Wade* shows that the political party holding the executive branch does not have large influence on domestic issues either. If Trump's term did not end after the 2020 presidential election, *Roe vs. Wade* likely would have still been overturned and larger corporations would still reap economic benefits from the war in Ukraine – all to the detriment and disregard of the general American population who lose money and rights. Despite the deep political divide in America, the status quo and the impact on Americans remains the same no matter who is in office.

Looking to the future, it is crucial to hold an optimistic outlook. The average American citizen does have some influence in the government. If their position aligns with one of the established political parties – conservative or liberal – then there is bound to be policies enacted that would support their position. In addition, with hyperpluralism comes a sense of significant civic and social activism by American citizens. The US government is forced to listen to the will of the people if there is enough unified advocacy.

### **Third Parties & the Possibility of a New Status Quo**

Now that this paper has examined the degree to which the status quo has changed under the Biden administration, it begs the question of what America's future will look like. How can we change the political and economic status quo of this nation? Will our government always be

corrupt no matter who is in power? When will this cycle of enriching the wealthy elites end, or will it lead to the inevitable demise of the United States?

The solution this article presents is simple in theory but difficult to enact. So long as Trump, Biden, and other political figures that align with the traditional Democrat versus Republican parties exert disproportionate influence in the government, the status quo will remain the same. Thus, this paper argues that the key to changing the status quo is to elect third party candidates into high positions. These figures would be committed to a new set of ideologies and values different from the traditional liberal and conservative politicians. Candidates should also be limited to campaign donations by the general American population instead of billion-dollar corporations so that the government officials are not in the pockets of the wealthy elite.

While speaking about third parties in the US, author Longley wrote, “While their candidates for President of the United States and Congress have little chance of being elected, America’s third political parties have historically played a major role in bringing about sweeping social, cultural, and political reform” (Longley, 2021). These third parties have historically influenced issues surrounding women’s right to vote, labor laws, and criminal justice. These parties bring about a greater possibility for change because they are not as closely tied to the corporations that donate to conservatives and liberals. Even though no third-party candidate has won the election and enforced a new status quo in contemporary American politics, there are several third parties active in elections. The Libertarian Party, for example, believes that “the federal government should play a minimal role in the day-to-day affairs of the people... the only appropriate role of government is to protect the citizens from acts of physical force or fraud. A libertarian-style government would, therefore, limit itself to a police court, prison system and military. Members support the free market economy and are dedicated to the protection of civil



liberties” (Longley, 2021). Even though this party would support the capitalist notion of a free market (which in part contributes to the excessive amount of corporate influence in the government), it would limit the overall role of government to a restricted set of duties, thus altering the political status quo of America. Another third party is the Social Party USA. This party “advocates for the creation of a ‘radical democracy that places people’s lives under their own control,’ a ‘non-racist, classless, feminist, socialist society’ in which ‘the people own and control the means of production and distribution through democratically-controlled public agencies, cooperatives, or other collective groups’” (Longley, 2021). Unlike the capitalist economic status quo, the United States has followed for centuries, this party advocates the ideals of Marxist Socialism. In his article, Longley explained that one of the core values of the Social Party USA is to emphasize that wealth is not limited to the private profit of the few and should instead be experienced by all members of society. This notion would not only restructure our political and economic system, but it would challenge the ideological foundations of the US by redistributing wealth to everyone, not just the elite class. There are other third parties like the Green Party and the Reform Party that could also hypothetically cause a transformation in the status quo of the nation. The policies they put forth would entail an entire reconstruction of the relationship between the government, economy, and people. The candidates from these parties would focus on different foreign policies not built around war and profit, and they would also move away from the polarization perpetuated by the media. Most importantly, these third parties could equalize the playing field by allowing the average American citizen, instead of corporations, to closely influence the government.

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that any third-party candidates will be elected into high positions of office soon because of several restricting factors under the current status quo and

disunity of the nation. Firstly, with a society that has become so hyper-focused on liberal and conservative positions on issues, it would be difficult for a third-party candidate to balance the ideologies unique to his or her party without getting swept into the values of either the Democrat or Republican party. This would defeat the entire purpose of voting a third party into office, because they would still conform to the status quo instead of creating a new path. It is also difficult for a third-party candidate to be elected because they are unable to gain the support of a large portion of the population. Most voters support the candidates from the party that they are already affiliated with, so it is rare for someone to allocate their vote to a third-party candidate. Finally, and arguably the largest obstacle to third party candidates, is that the election process relies on large donations not by the general American population, but by big-money corporations and billionaires. As one article found, thanks to the Supreme Court, “big money dominates US political campaigns to a degree not seen in decades. Super PACs allow billionaires to pour unlimited amounts into campaigns, drowning out the voices of ordinary Americans... It’s no wonder that most people believe the super-wealthy have much more influence than the rest of us” (Lee, 2018). Studies found that the recent 2020 presidential election reached “an unprecedented \$14 billion, making it the most expensive election in history and twice as expensive as the previous presidential election cycle.... Even amid a pandemic, everyone is giving more in 2020, from ordinary individuals making small donations to billionaires cutting eight-figure checks to super PACs” (2020 election...2020). If a third-party candidate does not receive substantial donations or have the support of larger corporations, then it is nearly impossible to make it far in a political election. When Bernie Sanders, a Democrat who supported socialist policies, ran for the 2020 election, he received many donations and support from the general American population – one study even reported that across the nation, Bernie

Sanders “received donations from an estimated 1.4 million people... far more than any other candidate in the Democratic primary race.” Even though he did not receive nearly enough donations, the donors who powered Sander’s campaign were not the wealthy elite class but ordinary citizens (Rebecca, 2020). Third parties are receiving new attention, although they will still find it difficult to gain a foothold in the American political system under the current cycle.

### **Conclusion**

The political and economic status quo in America is endangering the fabric of our society, but it is unlikely that anyone elected into office can really change the status quo in a positive direction. The body of this research paper proceeded in three parts: In the first section, we took a surface-level look at the political divide in America as well as the images Biden and Trump put forward. In the second, we took a deep-dive and used the theory of hyperpluralism to assess whether the political and economic status quo has changed under different leaders, and we argue that it has not. Finally, we assessed how to avoid the threat of a failed democracy, and we concluded that the first step would be to vote candidates from third parties into office.

The American status quo is becoming one in which the country is run by a plutocracy. There is an increasing gap between the rich and the poor, and this has been perpetuated under each US president – Democrat and Republican – for several decades. While claiming to be the world’s greatest democracy, America has consistently supported antidemocratic governments and prioritizes the demands of the wealthiest Americans while ignoring the democratic will of the majority – and this has become the status quo. Regardless of Trump or Biden in office, the core decisions of the government will remain the same even if it looks different on the surface.

However, even though this paper has exposed the deficiencies of the US government, it is important to look to the future instead of dwelling on the past. Democracy is a common value

shared by people from all around the world, and the United States is still considered the model democracy to many emerging nations. Built on the principles of natural rights, freedom, and equality for all, the United States is “centered around the belief that each individual has the right and freedom to seek prosperity and happiness, regardless of where or under what circumstances they were born” (Trinidad...2022). Under the current status quo, the government has started wars and passed laws that harm the working class; however, the government has accordingly enacted legislation to ensure the wellbeing, freedom, and inclusivity of all American citizens. There is still hope that the US can improve its democracy and shift the status quo by voting third party candidates into office and electing politicians funded by the people instead of by corporations. You can divide a union into red and blue and suppress the color you do not like so your color wins, or you can unite people of different colors and communities with the goal of mutual prosperity. The American people can challenge the status quo so that it is more constructive and inclusive only through a united effort.

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