

## **The Failing Experiment**

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### **Abstract**

In the modern American political scene, the idea of American democracy has been the most prevalent societally adopted belief for generations. A free-market capitalist economy coupled with the ideals of traditional democratic theory believed by most to exist as the primary political/economic driver of the United States. As the 21st century progresses however, political theorists and scholars argue that democracy is an increasingly inaccurate classification of the American political/economic system. Alternative schools of thought and ideology challenge the 'status quo', these schools otherwise known as The Four Theories of American government; democracy, hyper-pluralism, pluralism, and elite class theory. By taking an in depth look into what is commonly believed to be true of the American political economy, the effects of the two-party system, and the political compass, this paper seeks to answer the question of the legitimacy of American 'democracy', and as a result of this, a potential shift in the political paradigm of the United States.

## The Failing Experiment

The idea of the United States of America to our Founding Fathers was meant not only to be manifested in physicality, but also as an ideological reality among the American people, stated in the very first lines of the document signing the nation's existence into legal existence; the US Constitution. The preamble dictating, "We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessing of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution of the United States of America". Contrast to the current state of the American 'democracy' dominated by unrepresentative politicians and a media focus on distraction and promotion of the corporate illusion of the "American" lifestyle, it is no surprise that in a post-industrial United States, a polarizing veil has been cast on a nation once united by hard-working ideals and motivated by social mobility. In the modern economic/political climate, it remains abundantly clear this environment no longer exists in a country that proclaims itself, "the land of equal opportunity" and "united prosperity". The country our grandfathers time, who experienced the Greatest Generation and post war economic boom has clearly been auctioned off to the corporate 'boogeyman' dominating the American economic/political climate, a climate 90% of the American population exist in and are expected to conform to, yet while dictated by a system of government intent on leaving important decisions to unrepresentative %1, of which control most of the wealth. With a shrinking middle class, corporate tax cuts, growing wealth gap, inflation, cost of living, and a workforce slowly being outsourced to foreign nations, Americans are forced to out confront the reality that, in corporate America, a nation where opportunity was guaranteed, that systematic barriers exist for 90% of the population in this supposed 'democratic-republic', aided by a media that appeals to

corporate America and distraction. Without significant structural changes to America's democratic institutions, from this perspective, it is evident that the disproportionate power in America is not vested within the people, but instead to the plutocrats of generations before.

### **Democracy & Capitalism, a Paradoxical Relationship**

The Greek word 'democracy' is rooted from 'Demos', meaning power by the people, and 'Kratō', the power of rule. Officially this means rule by the people. This idea is the fundamental theory behind democracy, the people decide their legislation, leaders, and other important decisions regarding the welfare of their country, and how it benefits *them*. Capitalism is an economic system focused on incentivizing the accumulation of capital for one's own self-interest. Capitalism elevates and encourages competition, as its primary catalyst for economic growth. In the United States, in its current manifestation, free market capitalism only seems to be spiraling into a future recession/decline at the rate of which corporate monopolies are 'tightening the chokehold' on the middle and lower classes, of which they dominate for employment and services to the American public. It is no surprise then that in a system that emphasizes on promoting the common need/welfare of the people, a dynamic economic system such as "free market" capitalism, which accumulates capital, would serve as the primary economic system to uphold the cost of maintaining social welfare systems (healthcare, affordable housing, employment benefits, etc.), so crucial to representative democracy. According to a professor at the University of Louvain, "In a democracy, the masses broadly determine their future. Equally critically, in terms of the economy, society, and political system there is a level playing field where the working, middle classes, and affluent elites compete" (Amico, 2020). The importance of the 'even playing field' has slowly been curved, since the inception of the nation itself, for the favor and economic prosperity of a ruling elite which included the Founders themselves. The

Forefathers were themselves of predominantly white background, wealthy status, and were educated, slave-owning men. Currently, the institutional framework in place that determines the influence/control of public policy, does not in fact seek to favor that of the 90% of the American public with essentially little to no net worth (Moyers, 2016). Because of this disparity, the US may be a democracy in name only. Ferraras also explains that:

Capitalism is also a system of government, but an unequal one. It grants political rights based on capital ownership. Its core institution is the firm, which is made up of two classes of investor: capital and labor. In capitalist firms, political rights to govern are held by capital investors only, through the legal vehicle of the corporation. The only citizens that matter in the extractive logic of the capitalist firm are those who own capital — in other words, shareholders. They exercise the power and reap the bulk of the financial returns, while labor investors (i.e., workers) are disenfranchised (Amico, 2020).

An economy where the shareholder/investor, and not the working agent of the corporation responsible for producing the profits earned holds more influence is a direct expression of Elite Class Theory, a social/class theory dialectical to that of the realities of an intended “democracy”. According to assistant professor Steven Klein from the University of Florida explains:

“The organizing principles of democracy and capitalism differ. Democracy rests on the belief that everyone should have an equal say in decisions that affect them. Capitalism doesn’t. Instead, it bases production around the profit motive and the capacity to enter and exit relationships based on opportunities.” (Amico, 2020)

The advantageous hierarchy the investor/shareholder wields over the working man in the United States far outweighs the influence of the working class, ordinary, voting Americans, whose public policy/legislation falls on the authority of politicians and spokespeople actively

funded by a corporation, on either side of the spectrum. Essentially, in a political system that enunciates the common interest, yet promotes personal accumulation of money/influence to measure capital, the de facto ‘currency’ measure of worth in a free-market capitalist system, a political framework such as democracy simply cannot coexist. Thus, leaving those who are not immediate or large stakeholders of a corporate stock or business idea essentially peons to the necessities of the ‘free market’ and hyper-consumerist capitalism. Either way the working classes look for reform, they are practically shoehorned in a socioeconomic checkmate, the other players being the investor, and the CEO (Amico, 2020).

### **Political, Social, & Economic Inequality: The Tightening ‘Chokehold’**

The increasingly tense political climate of the United States is product of an increasing economic/social polarization by the ruling classes, which has been occurring steadily since the 1980s with Reaganomics, money pooling to the upper socioeconomic percentile via trickle-down economics. According to an economic journalist,

Since 1980, the economy has continued to grow impressively, but most of the benefits have migrated to the top. In these years, workers were more productive but received less of the wealth they were helping to create. In the late 1970s, the richest 1 percent received 9 percent of total income and held 19 percent of the nation’s wealth. The share of total income going to that 1 percent would then rise to more than 23 percent by 2007, while their share of total wealth would grow to 35 percent. And that was all before the economic meltdown of 2007-08 (Moyers, 2016).

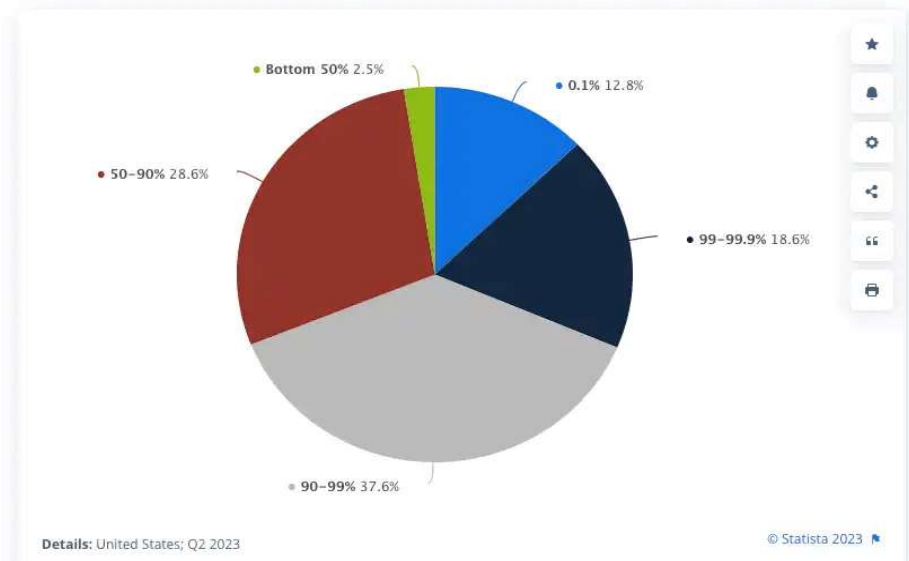
It is evident that in the America of once equal opportunity and ‘upward mobility’ the wealth has been concentrated to the upper most percentiles of the economy (Moyers, 2016).

## Figure 1

### *Wealth Distribution in the United States in the second quarter of 2023*

Economy & Politics > Economy

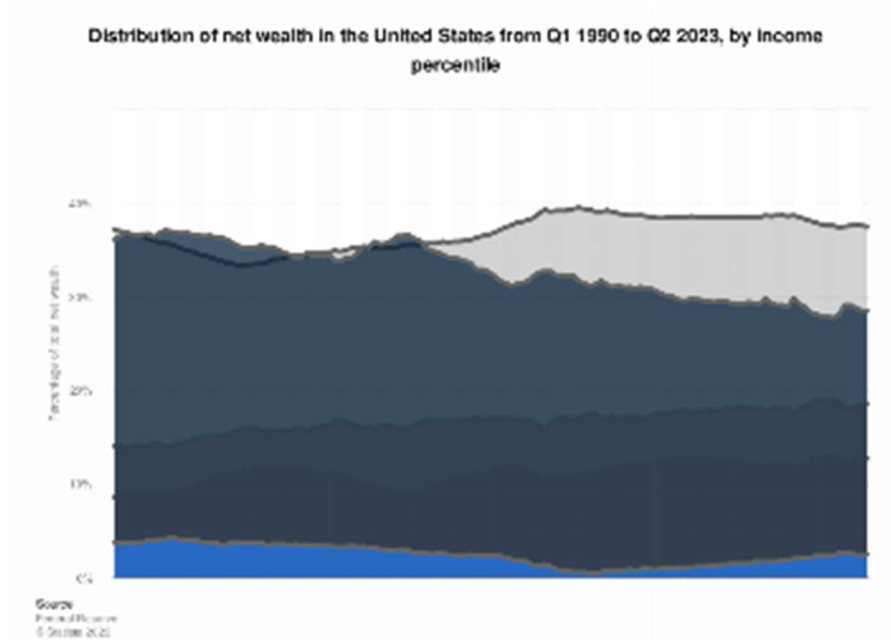
#### Wealth distribution in the United States in the second quarter



From the graph above, the elephant in the room that looms over the working classes is evidently the wealth gap. As of this year in the second quarter, as per the Status Quo, roughly 37.5% and 18.6% of the wealth remains pooled within the highest income percentiles of the American population, with the bottom 50% of the American populace retaining only 2.5% of the total net wealth. This status quo thus allows the ever-expanding ‘wealth gap’ to suck more money out of sectors of the American economy that focus on social welfare systems, and mechanisms of which power focus on the interest of the working class. In this way, if the ruling elite, who possess most of the money that can fund Americas ‘democratic institutions’ lies within the hands of the top 1%, true democratic influence (by the people) cannot be achieved without significant structural reformation.

## Figure 2

*Distribution of Net Wealth in the United States from Q1 from 1990-2023, by income percentiles*



As displayed in figure 2, the distribution of total net wealth within the United States, since the 1990s and prior, has only increased and reached record levels as of the second quarter of 2023, a rate of which remains stagnant among the 1% and 0.1%. According to the Statistical research Department, “Despite the idea that the United States is a country where hard work and pulling yourself up by your bootstraps will inevitably lead to success, this is often not the case. In 2021, 9.3 percent of U.S. households had an annual income under 15,000 U.S. dollars.” Keep in mind that on the other side hand, the Aggregated CEO-to-worker Compensation Ratio for 350 publicly owned companies reads 398.8, this means that the CEO of the majority of corporate firms in America is making 398.8 times the salary of his production and nonsupervisory workers (Statista, n.d.). The evidence is clear that the American definition of free market capitalism



inevitably creates big winners and bigger losers, as inherent to the capitalist economic system. The reality Americans must confront is that the inequality caused by the overreaching of corporate influence, which according to economist Moyers appears to be causing:

...Slow economic growth, [undermining] of health, erosion of social cohesion and solidarity, and a [starving of the] education system. In... *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*, epidemiologists Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett found that the most consistent predictor of mental illness, infant mortality, low educational achievement, teenage births, homicides and incarceration *was* economic inequality (Moyers, 2016).

Inequality feeds inequality, and it takes money to make money. With the top %1 vying to keep all the wealth, social mobility is now the reality of a bygone era in American history, and because of this, the United States risks decaying into a European, feudalistic, class-based society, similar to the Old Regime of the French Revolutionary era. A study by and academic economist stated that,

As recently as the 1980s, economists thought that ‘in the land of Horatio Alger only 20 percent of one’s future income was determined by one’s father’s income.’ He then cited research showing that, by 2007, ‘60 percent of a son’s income [was] determined by the level of income of the father. For women, it [was] roughly the same (Madrack, 2006).

In the modern day, a newly emigrated citizen to the United States the likelihood of climbing up the socioeconomic ladder in America is a more than grim, almost impossible reality, without having the aid of an inheritance or generational wealth. Both of which are factors that contribute to the radically disproportionate and ever-increasing wealth distribution. This is antithetical to democracy. A system that allows for the gatekeeping of influence to a select few,

who possess generations of wealth and monopoly is more like an elitist class system than one with an “even playing field” characteristic to a democracy. It is not so surprising that after the ruling elite possesses access to most of the wealth, they can begin to influence the ruling political system which, as the ruling elite view it, should work to serve *their* interests. This is the definition of an oligarchy/plutocracy, not a democracy.

### **The Government Does Not Represent You**

In 2010 the Supreme Court issued a landmark ruling over the Citizens United V. Federal Election Commission case, a ruling that reversed centuries old campaign finance restrictions. As a result of the repeal, the Court has accosted the working class their voice in government, which now is the catalyst for unprecedented expansion of lobbying from special interest groups and corporations to political entities/candidates. The former status quo if you will, being that the government had a ‘part to play’ in combating political corruption or unfair advantage between candidates. However, as per the repeal, the justices expressed that ‘independent political spending’ does not offer a substantial enough threat to the ‘democratic’ process, as long as it was not coordinated with a candidate's campaign. The final say being that corporations can effectively lobby support funds for whichever campaign they decide. From there, corporations or special interest groups can selectively prioritize candidates that best represent their interests and send unlimited support (money) for a specific campaign. While this may seem like a fair step made in the American ‘free market’, it actually enables special interest groups to allocate unlimited funds towards campaigns, without ‘strings attached’. The form these special interest groups take on are ‘PACS’ or Political Action Committees, which are organizations that raise/spend money against rival campaigns. With the repeal of Citizens United, political campaigns now have the ability to, “...accept unlimited contributions from both individual

donors and corporations as long as they don't give directly to candidates". It was also established by the ruling that PACs are permitted to invest money into ads or promotional material that promotes or attacks political candidates. Given lobbying from predominant corporate entities, the elite percentiles of the American economy can maintain their chokehold on the working classes and taxpayers who fund government efforts aided by contract to the corporations. With the privileges of the PACs unregulated, "dark money" lenders have the ability to take predominant roles in funding major campaign operations at the hands of the PACS. 'Dark money' being election/campaign funds of "unknown origin". The problem with this however is that the Supreme Court's ruling was based off the judgment that, "... the Supreme Court reasoned that unlimited spending by wealthy donors and corporations would not distort the political process, because the public would be able to see who was paying for ads and "give proper weight to different speakers and messages" (Lau, 2020).

Nevertheless, the reality stands that most Americans who go to the polls every 4 years, do not actually know, or care to know the source behind campaign spending. Thus, as a result, the repeal of Citizens United has allowed the corporations to exploit the lack of transparency and ramp up on the 'off the books' contributions. These expenditures to campaigns have increased "from 5 million in 2006 to more than \$300 million in the 2012 election cycle... [and] In the top 10 most competitive 2014 Senate races, more than 71 percent of the outside spending on the winning candidates was dark money" (Lau, 2020). The ability for Dark Money lenders to not only hide their means of profit not only raises questions about the legitimacy of the funds, but the 'no strings' nature of which funds are procured by said lenders not only subverts US voters and law, but also allows for potential collusion by foreign countries/agencies in the US 'democratic process'. The irony being that the same process by which voters believe they are partaking in a

democratic process, they are actually contributing to a voting system which, as of the present moment, caters to political parties, Republican or Democrat, intent on preserving the Status Quo. The same corporate boogeyman that repealed Citizens United is also responsible for the other, if not equally monumental supreme court ruling, Roe V. Wade. According to the Pew Research Center the majority of Americans disapprove of the U.S. Supreme Court's landmark ruling overturning the Roe v. Wade decision, which had guaranteed a constitutional right to an abortion for nearly 50 years. Public support for legal abortion remains largely unchanged since before the decision, with 62% saying it should be legal in all or most cases. The ruling came down to 5-4 in the Supreme Court, the conservative judges holding majority/sway in the overturning of the bill because of Trump's conservative appointments. The irony of this however lies behind the President who appointed the judges that voted 'nay' on Roe V. Wade, Donald Trump, who was the minority candidate of the 2016 Presidential Election... The majority of Americans agree on abortion, so why was it overturned? The War in Ukraine also remains a testament to the indifference of the federal government to the demands of the American people, of which only 45% support further military/economic aid to support Ukraine's war with Russia. The other 55% of the public opinion is vying for the US to cease heavy support for the war effort, in order to preserve national security (Agiesta, 2023). In a democracy, the discourse for both decisions would lie within the hands of the majority, which is not the case. If the majority were vested with the power to make decisions for themselves, the profits of the corporate elite would dry up. The continued government support of the war in Ukraine is allowing defense corporations, military contractors, and the government/politicians a money pit and a proxy war to test new modern weaponry, while also keeping the public discourse distracted to foreign events. Essentially a 'throw it at the wall and see if it sticks' mentality, the 'it' in this case being excuses for

incentivizing profits among corporations, with the support of the federal government. If the US were a democracy, the majority vote that doesn't support aid to the war in Ukraine would be heeded, not the corporate benefactors profiting from the conflict. Gordon Gekko, a crooked CEO using inside info to manipulate the stock of a company he plans to sell from the Oliver Stone drama *Wall Street* (1987) puts it best:

The richest one percent of this country owns half our country's wealth: \$5 trillion... You got 90 percent of the American public out there with little or no net worth. I create nothing. I own it. We make the rules, pal. The news, war, peace, famine, upheaval, the price per paper clip. We pick that rabbit out of the hat while everybody sits out there wondering how the hell we did it. Now, you're not naïve enough to think we're living in a democracy, are you, Buddy? It's the free market. And you're part of it.

In the American 'free market' the individual is either a peon for the motivations of those who possess the wealth, or they are a cog in the machine that keeps the corrupt, closed, and ever-profitting corporate system in power. Dissatisfaction with the ruling elite remains a unifying principle for Americans, according to the Centre for the Future of Democracy at Cambridge University, "Dissatisfaction with democracy in the U.S. has risen by one-third since the mid-1990s and now includes about half the population" (Amico, 2020). But those who sign the ballot in order to put power back in the hands of the people are actually confronting a double-edged sword, the reality being that both major political factions, Republicans & Democrats, both utilize corporate money of questionable origin, yet the same candidates that use this 'dark money' dish out misleading anecdotes about student loan forgiveness, tax cuts, and social benefits. The irony is that the real threat to the average American voter lies not within their rival party, but rather the government officials and candidates that appeal to the inequality that they claim to help combat.

It is really not so surprising then to see how the ‘corporate boogeyman’ as Gekko put it was able to clandestinely, ‘pull the rabbit out of the hat’.

A prime example of this is Trump's voter demographic, which disproportionately targets white, disparaged, and otherwise ‘forgotten’ blue-collar workers the corporations *helped* to contribute to unemployment via outsourcing, lowering wages, and by seeking to incentivize cheaper labor alternatives (Sanders, 2023). The more money in *their* pockets the better.

According to the Centre for the Future of Democracy at Cambridge University:

It was the white working class, whose counties had been ravaged by a loss of jobs, that elected Donald Trump in 2016. Yes, his supporters had cultural anxieties (opposition to immigration in particular) in addition to economic ones, but there’s no denying the surprisingly strong county-level correlation of votes for Trump with long-term economic distress, very low employment rates, plant closings related to trade, and the location of the opioid epidemic.

The proof is in the pudding, the great irony being that the corporate America that billionaire candidate Trump belongs to, funded his campaign that so promised to bring economic empowerment back to the blue-collar Americans that were manipulated into believing that a lifelong billionaire, is concerned with the economic inequality of the hard working Americans that keep the money flowing to his bank account. This is essentially a smaller representation of the great irony that is the duality in the American political/economic system. The rich play to stay rich while the lower classes advertently/inadvertently tolerate the chokehold the elites have on the populous, who can effectively ‘play god’ with their money, keeping them in power. This is proven by the fact that in 2017, Trump passed some of the most volatile tax cuts to the corporations (Amico, 2020). According to a report from the Center for American Progress,

Last year, AT&T made \$29.6 billion in 2021, but paid nothing in federal income taxes that year. Instead, AT&T got a \$1.2 billion refund from the IRS. Similarly, the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy identified 55 profitable Fortune 500 companies.

Additionally,

... the average tax rate for companies in 2017 was 14.6 percent, which dropped to just 8.9 percent in 2018. This report... found profitable American corporations paid just 14 percent of their profits in federal income taxes on average from 2008 through 2012, and about one-fifth of them paid nothing at all each year.

The government does not support nor seeks to work in the common interest of the people and will do anything to withhold the ability for the majority to do so. The post-war era of 'shared prosperity' has been swapped with a system in where seemingly, the ideals of upward mobility have stopped beating in favor of the wealth being allocated to the super rich, hedge fund managers rake in billions without paying a dime in taxes, and legislation that cuts tax for politicians and special interest groups, it is clear that the institution of democracy is the most at risk within the United States, if it ever has been a democracy (Sanders, 2023). The Greek philosopher Plutarch once warned that, "an imbalance between rich and poor is the oldest and most fatal ailment of a Republic", an imbalance and ailment that grows larger and only looms towards a future of economic disparity at the rate of which the antithetical forces; democracy and American 'free market' capitalism, are pushing the United States to the brink. So, who dunnit?

### **Corporate Power**

None other than the elites themselves, obviously. The investors of the corporations that desire influence over the government, in order to as mentioned, fuel rampant profits by lowering the 'playing field'. According to renowned economist M. Kelly,

Ford gets the buyer's money only when it sells a new car. Similarly, companies get stockholders' money only when they sell new common stock. According to figures from the Federal Reserve, in recent years about one in one hundred dollars trading on public markets has been reaching corporations. In other words, ninety-nine out of one hundred 'invested' dollars are speculative.

This is a similar situation responsible for the economic Depression of the 1930s, of which investors practiced a faulty form of investment by taking a loan, and then investing it into the stock market, effectively incentivizing profits based on speculation, a dangerous game for any economy. Kelly redresses:

That's today. But the past wasn't much different. One accounting study of the steel industry examined capital expenditures over the entire first half of the twentieth century and found that issues of common stock provided only 5 percent of capital. So, what do stockholders contribute, to justify the extraordinary allegiance they receive? Very little”

As stated by Kelly, in the American free market capitalist economy, the investor actually holds most of the sway when determining the discourse of a corporate entity, of which colludes with government/political officials to successfully lobby money to campaigns, and therefore uphold the status quo. In this respect, in the United States, the investor is the most 'high value' interest group in American society, of which the corporations, and therefore the political establishment must cater to, in order to continue reaping the benefits. In this respect, Kelly states, the corporations act a lot like a “... lock-and-dam operation, raising the water level in one compartment by lowering it in another”, time to say goodbye to “social mobility” and an “even playing field”, Gekko now runs the economy. These venture-capitalists are able to stay ahead because they play ahead, are catered to by political/structural institutions that rely on capitalist,



or corporate money to stay afloat (Kelly, 2006). In this America, ‘democracy’ does not exist without the “free market”, a fact to put it simply, that is not the reality of a democracy.

According to journalist Moyers (2016) these elites,

...use their wealth to gain political power, often through campaign contributions and lobbying. In this way, they only increase their influence over the choices made by the politicians indebted to them. While there are certainly differences between Democrats and Republicans on economic and social issues, both parties cater to wealthy individuals and interests seeking to enrich their bottom lines with the help of the policies of the state (loopholes, subsidies, tax breaks, deregulation). No matter which party is in power, the interests of big business are largely heeded.

The inherent ideology of capitalism prioritizes personal wealth/influence of the shareholder, which inevitably breeds a continuous trail of disparity due to its nature. In capitalism competition is the law of nature, the catalyst for growth, and because of this, “capitalism tends to breed market concentration and a long series of abuses, as the Great Recession clearly showed. Individuals and corporations are continuously tempted to evade or to use loopholes in the law”. So why is it that the western world has been able to, “[accumulate] more resources than human history has ever witnessed, yet appears powerless to overcome poverty, starvation, exploitation and inequality? ... Why does private wealth seem to go hand in hand with public squalor?” (Moyers, 2016). It's because under the Status Quo, the inevitability of BIG winners and BIG losers is the harsh reality of it. In order for the corporations to keep producing profits, they must incentivize their shareholders demands, because of this, Kelly (2006) stating,

... the interests of one group will be systematically favored over others. In a system devoted to unconscious regulation, it says corporations will consciously serve one group alone. In a system rewarding hard work, it says members of that group (elites) will be served regardless of their productivity.

If one group is systemically prioritized, then democracy ceases to exist. Thus, making the United States more akin to the aristocratic 'democratic economies' of Russia, China, and India (Kelly, 2006). The great irony here is that the increasingly aristocratic system and rampant class divide is what motivated the American, and French Revolutions. America is confronted with the blunt truth that, in order to stay on top, along with the other world powers aforementioned, its economic boogeyman must substitute the power/influence of the people, which unlike itself does not seek dominion over the world community. The American citizen is more akin to that of the American 'subject', a peon for use to ensure the welfare of the elite's profit, and therefore the US government, which seeks economic supremacy. This influence is not only felt at home, but in the form of the "Capitalist Empire of the United States", which now outsources big brands names and corporations to foreign countries for 'better' markets. When your own country is barely hanging on, why not ruin another? In this respect, the old philosophy of imperialism did not seemingly fade away into the 'utopia' of post-war American society but has at last manifested itself as the world's #1 economic empire. Not for long...

### **Who Owns What?**

The reality of US monopoly not only exists in the market already but is extending past wall street and into the portfolios of the average day-trader, since after the market crash of 2008 investors have been targeting index funds such as the S&P 500 as the new method for "the democratization of investing".

The mutually owned index fund S&P 500, the market of index funds is highly concentrated being run by only 3 corporate entities: Blackrock, Vanguard ETF, and State Street. These are called “The Big 3”. The Big 3, together, have become the largest shareholder in %40 of all public firms within the US. Index funds, such as the S&P 500, are the poster child of corporate investment, which comprises a multitude of corporate firms, all under a single investment umbrella. The S&P 500 specifically being synthesized by the firms, “...Apple, Microsoft, ExxonMobil, General Electric and Coca-Cola.” The S&P 500 also takes the spot as the index fund in which most day-traders and shareholders invest. The consequences of The Big Three's unprecedented ownership position are clear and concern economists globally. This is in unison with a trend that shows the rapid monopolization of industries such as aviation and banking, the Big Three, being unsurprisingly the largest shareholders of these sectors of the American economy, possessing the firms American Airlines, United, Continental Delta, JP Morgan & Chase, Citigroup, Bank of America, and Citigroup. The corporate influence of the Big Three is unprecedented, and likely its full extent is unknown; however, CEOs have shown a recognition for the influence of “The Big Three”, with airlines refusing to bump down ticket prices, most likely to incentivize further profits for them, their mutual owner (Fichtner et al). Because of this, “The Big Three” can exercise ‘de-facto’ structural influence over a concerning large percentile over American business firms, a can of worms that once opened, will be hard to reseal. This is the primary concern of economists who are concerned with what the accumulation of power means for competitors to earn market shares, thus creating a monopoly. Given such unprecedented growth and control over investors through index funds, because of its large concentration and influence of American firms, the “The Big Three” will hold the attention of economists for years down the line, as the ‘corporate chokehold’ only grows tighter on the

working and middle classes. If corporations hold a monopoly on assets, the inherent structure of capitalism (competition) is also then threatened within the United States, along with democracy.

Insight from economist Kelly (2016) stating,

Physicians applaud when their portfolios rise in value yet wonder why insurance companies are ruthlessly holding down medical payments. Employees cheer when their 401 (k) plans post gains yet wonder why layoffs are decimating their firms. Their own portfolios hold the answer.

The endangerment of democracy and the failures of free-market capitalism has resulted in the aforementioned governments such as India, Russia, and China, who have successfully subsidized the state and corporate efforts into one entity, accompanied with authoritarian power more reminiscent of the feudal societies of Middle Age Europe (China & Russia). Benito Mussolini once said, “Fascism should more properly be called corporatism, because it is the merger of state and corporate power...”, a reality looming ever closer in an increasingly monopolistic, and corporate America. The question remains, how long can it last?

### **The Media and the “Status Quo”**

It is speculated the former Minister of Propaganda of Nazi Germany, Joseph Goebbels once claimed, “If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it” whether this was the exact phrasing is unknown, but the commentary is intriguing, especially while it justifies perpetuating the Status Quo. The mainstream media (CNN, Fox, MSNBC, CBS, the New York Times, the Washington Post... list goes on) operates a lot like a ‘yes-man’ for the corporation, affecting how democracy and the state of the nation is perceived. If criticism and exposure to the realities of the struggling American “free-market system” were reported on, the working classes that keep the elites in power would revolt. The American media

is especially adept at manipulating its audiences away from the real enemy of ‘democracy’, which is not the Russians invading Ukraine, or the Chinese, but rather the investor. What the corporate media has achieved, especially in the last few decades with the rise of avenues, is unsurprising. According to economist Boyer (2003),

Americans lose control over the meaning of capitalism when they equate "capitalism" with ‘democracy’. American foreign policy uses this deception when the United States is said to be dedicated to furthering democracy in the world; but the truth is that the objective is mainly to further capitalism. The most favored term is freedom. When the terms "capitalism," "democracy," and "freedom" are intertwined in domestic or foreign policy, there is no chance of conceptual clarity. They mesh together. That is the point of meshing them—public misunderstanding is essential to the perpetuation of the power structures of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The corporate media has effectively rebranded American ‘democracy’ to include capitalism alongside it, so that the idea of ‘freedom’ is understood as a government with a marketplace, a marketplace that by design, can and will frequently undermine the otherwise ‘democratic’ institutions or ideologies for profit, in a so called ‘democracy’. Thus are the fundamentals of capitalism, competition to reach ‘the top’. This ‘top’ the corporate media would have the average American convinced is still accessible to them, with most Americans still believing capitalism as if it were a religion (Boyer, 2006). This sense of devout/religious belief in Capitalism is a product of generations of a Marxist political theory called ‘false consciousness’. This same theory explains why the feudal serfs of Europe during the Middle Ages did not revolt; they genuinely believed their system was just (Mahbubahni, 2020). The primary belief among the serfs being that each king and lord was appointed divinely, thus disguising the system of

subordination, exploitation, and domination around them. Most Americans live their lives driven by capitalistic rules fed to them by the media and the education system, according to Boyer (2003),

...our schools are institutions that prepare us to be efficient contributors to a capitalist economic order, though they tell students that they live in a democracy. The new "age of communication" mainly adds technology to make the current system more efficient, without questioning its goals or values.

The corporate media intentionally seeks to confuse most of the American populace, the current manifestation of this being the two-party system and its influence on American politics, which is arguably at its most unpredictable since the Civil Rights era of the 1960s. If the focus of media can shift to that of social/political discourse between the people, the narrative of democracy can be maintained, while also diverting the attention from those writing legislations that keep the subordinate classes, subordinate. Essentially, if corporate media can polarize the lines between the American people enough, they can stoke enough division to keep the attention away from the exploitation of the working classes. The inherent irony of the current political divisions within the United States being that, according to Moyers:

Both parties cater to wealthy individuals and interests seeking to enrich their bottom lines with the help of the policies of the state (loopholes, subsidies, tax breaks, deregulation).

No matter which party is in power, the interests of big business are largely heeded.

(Moyers, 2016)

John Rawls, one of the influential American political philosophers of the modern era, offering insight when he predicted,

If those who have greater private means are permitted to use their advantages to control the course of public debate,” this would be the corrupting result: Eventually, these inequalities will enable those better situated to exercise a larger influence over the development of legislation. In due time they are likely to acquire a preponderant weight in settling social questions...(Mahbubani, 2020).

Essentially, Rawls is saying that if the American people allow the corporate/ruling elite to exercise their advantageous economic influence, as historically evident, that they will be responsible for approval of important social legislations that will end up lowering the ‘lock and dam’ for about %90 of the American population. Thus, maintaining the status quo in a similar manner to the ‘Old Regime’ of pre-revolutionary France.

It is clear that in the United States, the dynamic nature of the capitalist system has greatly undermined the ‘democratic’ political system, and Americans are growing more aware of the encroaching presence of the corporate ‘boogeyman’ and its influence on America's ‘democratic’ institutions. The need to incentivize profits, as per the ideals of unrestricted free market capitalism have overridden and come to define the value and influence of each American citizen, by production of their capital, not their contributions to society/legislations. It is at this instant that democracy dies, and instead abides by the sway of those who in the capitalist ‘free- market’, hold most of the value, the investor. However, it is not only the failures of recent legislation, but also reflective of the failures of the previous generations, and the modern American citizen, who will live to see continued corporate domination over American society if they allow it so. It is abundantly clear that the political and economic structure have changed with American society beyond what the Founding Fathers could have predicted, and it is because of this reason that the American people must intervene if the overall welfare of America’s ‘democracy’ is to triumph

over the current governing institutions which seek to cater to a small segment of the population, the venture-capitalists of the 1%, who only wish to widen their pockets, by any means necessary, going as far as to divide their own countrymen to do so. For this reason, the current structure of American government identifies much more with that of a plutocracy or oligarchy, rather than a democracy. It is crucial for the American populace to accept that without united and effective action taken to call out the 1% for its exploitation of the subordinate classes, that significant structural changes must be made to American political institutions, away from collusion with corporate money, in order for the perseverance of any American ‘democracy’ to occur, and for status quo to change.

### **Status Quo or Overthrow? - The 2024 Presidential Election**

Against the Founders wishes the American political landscape as of the present is highly ‘polarized’, with the two major parties, Republican and Democrat, taking up most of the ballots within the Electoral College. The irony being that it has been this way for generations, contrast to that of the Founders, specifically George Washington's warnings in his Farewell Address, of which he urged the American populace to take heed of any political faction that seeks to overrule the power of government and legislation vested by the US Constitution. However, it is obvious to most Americans that this warning has been deemed long since outdated. After the dissolution of the Whigs in the 1850’s due to infighting regarding slavery, the Republican Party was able to quickly rise, with a new set of ideals that were aligned against slavery, yet more in line with Jeffersonian virtues of independent, family run economy made up of a largely agrarian nation. With the Democratic Party's resurgence in the Antebellum period (after infighting akin to that of the Whigs), the two political entities (Republicans & Democrats) dominated the landscape, and continue to do so today. The question posed however is how both competing parties have



survived the 150 years after the Civil War period, and because of this, a potential explanation for the stagnation of competition. With an economic status quo enamored by competition as a catalyst (capitalism), the antithetical nature of the political discourse within the establishment has changed little as of the past 150 years, this being caused by the duopoly of the republican and democratic parties. However, in a representative democracy, the political discourse should ideally change with the desires of the people, and party dominance would have likely shifted by this point. Just as Capitalism in the United States should ideally allow the enterprise of the common man, parties that seek to represent the real majority of the American political spectrum should have a chance in the White House. The explanation behind the seeming stagnation is because the duopoly is actually a monopoly, both parties serving to maintain the other's well-being, a relationship more alike 'frenemy' than a rivalry, and because of this, no real significant political realignment can occur on either side of the spectrum.

Every four years approximately half the American populace casts a ballot to the Electoral College, keep in mind that the total population of the United States is 331.9 million as of 2023 (US Census Bureau). However, even while in 2020 the voter turnout soared to a 'whopping' 158.1 million, which is more than elections historically, this is only half the nation being represented within the current establishment at 62.8%. The reason for this being is either the impoverished do not have time to vote to supplement that rising costs of living, and that the other half of the country does not feel represented by the same cast of Republicans and Democrats who have continually proven to fail at resolving key issues plaguing the middle and working classes, being met with failed promise after failed promise or through outright deception... Trump. The United States in retrospect, scores fairly mediocre when in comparison to the other world democratic efficacy with around 70% claiming they do not feel represented in 2020, which was

an outlier... (Pew Research Center). As of the upcoming 2024 Presidential Election, the political landscape for half the population is bleak. This was made none the more obvious after the 2020 Presidential Election, of which Biden's campaign, which was presented the Obama like savior destined reclaim 'social order' among disgruntled Americans during the midst of the pandemic, failed to deliver on most of the campaign promises that attracted the large turnout seen to dispose of Trump. Things such as: student loan forgiveness, protection for immigrants, reduction in college tuition costs, minimum wage increase, bans on assault weapons dealing/manufacture, and universal healthcare, among many others (Camp, 2021). However, in the three almost four years Biden has been in office, nothing has changed, and the status quo maintains its ever-tightening chokehold on the middle and working classes. However, it can be debated if Biden's 'expectations' or 'plans' were realistic to begin with... It is thus understandable why the ever decreasing/relatively stagnant voter turnout continues on its concerning trajectory, nix the 2024 Presidential Election, which will be primarily fueled by the false narrative that Biden is the only alternative to a tyrannical reign of Trump, whose entire administration made the US a laughingstock. The depressing irony of the reality Americans must accept in the 2024 Presidential Elections is that it is either another four years of blatant bailouts for the oligarchic elite upholding the status quo, or the subservient reliance the democratic party has to the fossil fuels, pharmaceutical, insurance industries, and PACs that contribute an unknown portion of dark money that fuels their campaigns (Hedges, 2020).

During the 2008 Presidential Elections, Obama's administration was presented as the most viable alternative for the working and middle classes yielding similar promises/goals to Biden in his 2020 campaign, however Obama's administration was continuously was defined by,

... the inheritance of a massive military and austerity machine that was expanded to new heights under the auspices of a Democratic Party administration. Drone strikes, bank bailouts, public school closures, witch hunts of whistleblowers, deportations of undocumented immigrants, and overseas wars... So did the militarization of U.S. police departments and the wealth gap between white and Black America.

The black and minority vote was a significant demographic for the Biden Administration to gain in the 2020 Presidential Elections, the same fact applies when taking into account that up to 80% of those impoverished and at risk of losing their homes are the valuable votes cast by minorities such as blacks and Latinos, pivotal to Biden's voter base. This was during the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic, and even then, upon taking office during that 'rocky' era of the American political climate, Biden stood firm on his general lack of action regarding Medicare for those in need, Haiphong adds:

Biden has remained firm in his opposition to Medicare for All. He has also rejected or outright ignored the possibility of a federal jobs program or a universal basic income to ensure that the basic needs of a vast majority of the population are met. Instead, Biden and the Democrats say they want to restore "the soul of the nation." The 2020 election is thus more of a religious crusade to politically purify Washington D.C. of its Trumpian elements in a bid to make America 'great' again.

This policy is unlike senator Bernie Sanders, the losing 'Democratic' candidate in the 2020 Presidential Elections (Haiphong, 2020).

Prior to Biden's 2020 Presidential campaign, Biden was a guest at a fundraiser hosted by a co-founder of Western LNG, Andrew Goldman, CEO of a natural gas corporation. When questioned by Andersen Cooper on CNN for explanation given his historically supportive stance

on combating climate change, Biden simply remarked he was ‘not aware’ of Goldmans connections to the fossil fuels industry. The other co-founder of Western LNG, David Thames, was previously vice president and chief financial officer of another natural gas company, Cheniere Energy. Cheniere Energy had been endorsing Biden's main climate advisor, Heather Zichal, with over \$1 million to serve on its board right up until before Biden's 2020 campaign, Zichal a (now) former Biden advisor lobbying for the company. The Company even plans to expand to Western Canada to begin supplying natural gas to Asia. This is in line with previous actions exhibited by the Obama Administration, which rapidly accelerated the export of American natural gas to foreign markets, and while on the surface this may seem like a good thing for local economies, it only furthers reliance on natural gas industry, inhibiting the climate change reform flaunted in Bidens 2020 Presidential Campaign, and even so,

When Biden was vice president, his administration oversaw the biggest natural gas production expansion in U.S. history and lifted the crude oil export ban for the first time in 40 years. President Trump is continuing Obama’s exports policies and helped cement a 2017 deal for Cheniere to export billions of dollars’ worth of natural gas to China.

It is evident that historically, Bidens policy on climate change has been questionable at best, regardless of his campaign promises on climate change during his 2020 or 2024 Elections, Kotch adds:

Zichal suggested that Biden would pursue a ‘middle ground’ climate policy, something the campaign walked back after criticism. Biden’s climate plan received a B+ rating from Greenpeace, putting his policy in sixth place among current presidential contenders. Sen. Bernie Sanders (D-Vt.) has the best plan, earning an A rating.

Conveniently, the Biden Administration has stepped back on its climate policy (like Medicare), a major strong point in garnering support from its voter base, who are left with a lack of realistic alternatives not in allegiance with the corporately/privately funded column upholding the duopoly (Kotch, 2019). Not to mention that as of recently, Biden has signed the Fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act into law allotting \$816.7 billion to the Defense Department (Garamone, 2022). For a president whose campaign slogan for his 2024 election is “let's finish the job for the American people”, the approval of an \$800 billion defense budget is a bit overkill given the host of social welfare programs as mentioned that for much less, could be maintained and alleviate economic and social disparity stretching the working and middle classes. Haiphong adding:

Biden and the Democrats are principally concerned with salvaging social peace while extending the empire's reach abroad. Any alleviation to the suffering of the masses is considered by all sections of the ruling class to be a fetter on the maximum accumulation of private profit.

The irony of the overarching two-party system and its rise is that in American free market capitalism, competition breeds success, and the endorsement of any future political candidate is seen as a large financial ‘investment’, because of this, the rise of any political candidate guarantees social mobility for the candidate, as long as they appeal to those who endorse them. The result of this business-like political dynamic is a compromise of the original purpose of an intended office for economic incentive/preservation regardless of a candidate's campaign ‘goals.’ According to Magruder's American Government Interactive by Shea, a high school issue textbook on American government, “Most segments of the business community also have their own interest groups... Those that represent the pharmaceutical, oil, and natural gas industries are

generally regarded as among the most powerful and effective interest groups" (Shea, 2023).

Interestingly detailed in a high school textbook is the corporate influence on the sway of legislation/politics regardless of whichever party holds office, which supports the further expansion of the military industrial complex, and the blind eye to a suffocating working and middle classes under the chokehold of oligarchy. The military, according to Whitehead of ICH,

...bleed[s] the country dry at a rate of more than \$15 billion a month (or \$20 million an hour)—and that's just what the government spends on foreign wars. America boasts almost 50% of the world's total military expenditure, spending more on the military than the next 19 biggest spending nations combined. In fact, the Pentagon spends more on war than all 50 states combined spend on health, education, welfare, and safety. Yet what most Americans fail to recognize is that these ongoing wars have little to do with keeping the country safe and everything to do with enriching the military industrial complex at taxpayer expense.

The sad truth is that this number is only to increase as of the 2023 approval for expansion of the defense budget, which is more money coming out of the pocket of Americans for issues and conflicts that have no relevance to the overall welfare of their lives in the United States, hundreds of miles away. The reality being that currently, the average taxpayer's money is heralded to support the motivations of the defense contractors, corporations, and any interest groups that seek to expand US economic and social influence abroad, a sort of neo-imperialism designed to continue fueling Wall Street and the war machine (Whitehead, 2020). Remember, competition breeds success, how else would America stay 'number 1'? To add insult on injury, leading up to the 2024 Elections, according to Haiphong, Biden has critiqued Trump Administration:

...for being “weak” on Venezuela, Russia, the DPRK, and China. National security officials such as John Negroponte, George W. Bush’s bully at the U.N. during the push to invade Iraq, have flocked in droves to support the Biden campaign . Military contractors such as Boeing have already expressed their confidence that military spending will increase regardless of who is (s)elected president.

Even if the country is “saved” from another four years under Trump's tyranny, a war-mongering party still occupies the White House. The duopoly that upholds continued re-election of the democratic party requires profits to keep funding campaigns, the military-industrial complex, and the incentives of the oligarchic ‘round table’ of defense contractors and corporations that rely on said complex to keep the profits churning. When it starts to go downhill in the homeland, why not seek exotic foreign markets? (Haiphong, 2020). Wars also conveniently serve as a distraction for the corporate media to keep the American people at bay, however as dissatisfaction with the War in Ukraine steadily continues,

Western support for the proxy war against Moscow is faltering. Even some members of Washington’s militant war party are losing hope. On his recent visit to the U.S. The Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was received by Biden administration officials, but without the usual fawning attention from Congress and the media.

Rather conveniently, when the state of stalemate and deteriorating conditions of the War in Ukraine continue to worsen, the media has little if nothing to say at all. The irony is that the one topic that ‘remained taboo’ among Zelensky's aides and Ukraine’s backers was peace talks with Russia. Much of the responsibility for this belongs to the Biden Administration which actively, “...refused to seriously negotiate with Moscow before the war, undermined talks between Ukraine and Russia, and steadily expanded a proxy war with a nuclear-armed power over stakes

far more important to it than to the U.S”, this is unsurprising given that historically the United States, regardless of administration, has always maintained an aggressive policy of containment towards its ‘defeated foe’ Russia (formerly the Soviet Union) by testily expanding NATO despite diplomatic statements to the contrary (Bandow, 2023). For the ‘round table’, the upcoming 2024 election is a guaranteed victory, whoever wins the presidency...

### **“The People that Shine Your Shoes”**

... The people you're trying to step on, we're everyone you depend on. We're the people who do your laundry and cook your food and serve your dinner. We make your bed. We guard you while you're asleep. We drive the ambulances. We direct your call. We are cooks and taxi drivers and we know everything about you. We process your insurance claims and credit card charges. We control every part of your life... We are the middle children of history, raised by television to believe that someday we'll be millionaires and movie stars and rock stars, but we won't. And we're just learning this fact. So don't fuck with us.”

Tyler Durden, *Fight Club* (1999)

Take it from the voters themselves, a survey from the Associated Press/NORC finds that 85% of Americans including 92% of self-identified Republicans & 78% of self-identified Democrats say, “things in this country are headed in the wrong direction.” (Knapp, 2022). The past twenty or so years the Status Quo has not altered much regardless of administration, and the American people are beginning to realize this even after years of distraction by corporate media. The reason for this being that one does not have to look very far to notice the increasingly stagnant pace of which legislation is being made to actively combat the ever encroaching national and existential questions regarding the future of the United States, and an increasingly



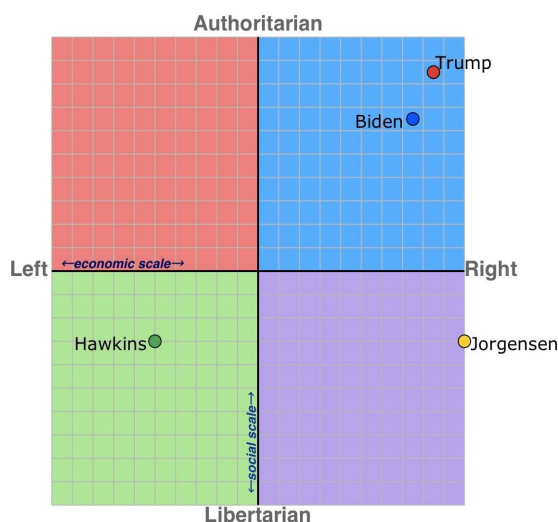
volatile world climate, politically and environmentally. The infighting between either party and within each party Republican or Democrat has allowed the duopoly the Founders warned against to effectively 'checkmate' the American people into governmental limbo. This is not aided by the fact that in the current state of American electoral institutions, rampant class divide has made the mobility of representative candidates nearly impossible. This is by design. Look at the failed yet popular campaign of Sen. Bernie Sanders, an infamously anti-corporate figurehead and democratic socialist, the very embodiment of anti-oligarchy. The concerning irony being that in a nation once proclaimed the 'equal land of opportunity', the wealth gap, increasing costs of living, alongside rapidly increasing inflation has essentially made upward mobility nearly impossible without corporate sponsorship, or generational wealth. This leaves the members of the oligarchic class the only viable individuals with enough 'self-worth' realistically (as defined by capitalism) to 'lead' the nation. Thus, leaving a large pool of potential leaders and intellectuals essentially staring at a corporately funded & constructed 'brick wall' in regard to competing politically in a nation of 'free and fair elections.' Never mind Russian collusion, anti-democratic policies are baked within the electoral institutions of the American government, thus explaining the lack of any radical shift in politics.

## The Political Compass & Contemporary American Politics

(The Political Compass)

Another stark piece of evidence upholding the Status Quo is depicted within the 2020 Presidential Election political compass readings for the two major party candidates, Trump and Biden. The Compass displays the clear difference between the two in regards to political ideology being slight at best, perhaps an explanation for the complete lack of change in the political scene since Bernie as one would otherwise believe when listening to the campaign rhetoric on either side of the spectrum. Caitlin Johnstone, a journalist for Consortium News adds:

### The US Presidential Election 2020: Last Lap Reflections



Noam Chomsky once said that ‘The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum,’ and you really couldn’t ask for a clearer illustration of this than the American political uniparty. People are encouraged by establishment narrative managers to squabble about inconsequential nonsense on the periphery with fever pitch intensity, and to never even think about addressing

dynamics which would actually inconvenience the powerful like ending militarism, government opacity, or plutocracy.

By design within the American two-party system, debate and rhetoric that focuses on irrelevant issues that distract from the prominent socio-economic questions of the era allows for the 'round table' to refrain from showing media that results in class consciousness for the working/middle classes. This is the ultimate threat to the oligarchs. Johnstone adding:

Neither party has any interest in the basic social safety nets that are the norm in other developed nations, let alone wealth redistribution to end economic inequality, and are both as far as you can possibly get from having actual leftist goals like ending capitalism and worker ownership of the means of production.

Regardless of party affiliation, neither have expressed care regarding the majority, as long as the duopoly stays atop the American 'political' sphere, the 'round table' will continue to exercise its influence through keeping both parties obedient to its necessary endorsement, thus allowing for the motivations of which seek to undermine American 'democracy' for profit via stoking conflict, racial/social division, and generally deceiving the American working classes away from any form of unifying class consciousness, then the inherently corrupt institutions under corporate puppetry will continue to uphold the Status Quo regardless of whoever wins the next election; or any election in the foreseeable future. The uniparty works to advance the interests of oligarchs, war profiteers and imperialist government agencies in more or less exactly the same way; the corporate media however shifted the characteristics of fundamental issues to include distracting debates powerful capitalists do not care about like gay marriage and unisex public toilets. So now mainstream "conservatives" think leftism means having pink hair and

mainstream “liberals” think Trump supporters are useful idiots of the Kremlin, but in terms of actually challenging actual power there’s not a bee’s dick of difference between them (Johnstone, 2020). Each party, desperate for control of the uniparty each year resorting to the utmost tedious measures to keep the money flowing, Knapp explains,

From gerrymandering to preserve ‘safe’ districts for each of the two factions, to a death grip on candidate access to ballots... to the natural inclination of big campaign money to go to the party in power rather than to upstarts and rebels, The Republican/Democratic uniparty guards its prerogatives of jealousy as well as any banana republic or communist dictatorship.

It is evident that the United States may flaunt and label its current government establishment as democracy, but it is a democracy in name only, a wolf in sheep's clothing, which ironically with every changing administration (including the Biden Administration), seeks to invest its ideology (Capitalism) elsewhere for the max accumulation of profit, a sort of divine right similar to that of the European powers justify imperialist actions with Social Darwinism, the ‘civilization’ of lesser nations ‘due diligence’ for a technologically superior people. It appears that as of the present, “That old saying that both parties are just two wings on the same bird is true, but it’s a weird mutant bird with two right wings” (Johnstone, 2020). However, unlike the era of imperialism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, those who have the power to possess and control the ‘sphere of influence’ are the organizations that see the investor as those of the most worth, even on the global scale. How else would America stay ‘number 1’?

## **America from Afar: The Four Theories of American Government**

The United States has historically been believed to fall under the democratic system of governance, but as the economic and political climate of the United States continue to worsen, without noticeable change of the Status Quo regardless of leadership, it is evident that the United States more resembles an oligarchy. The symbiotic relationship between class and political power creates a rigid structure within the nation that is more akin to a caste system, rather than a nation that resembles the 'land of equal opportunity'. It is because of this fact that the American people, in order to manifest any sort of change in the Status Quo, new schools of thought must be considered and on a mass scale, never mind the false rivalries and bickering between two divided parties, that both stand for the same future or America: Neo-imperialist oligarchy. The Four Theories of American government follow the order; democracy, pluralism, hyper-pluralism, and elite class theory, of which class theory has been mentioned. Since the United States does not appear to be a democracy, the three remaining schools of thought are left to redefine American government.

The First Theory of American government; Pluralism states that America is governed by a multitude of interest groups all vying for power, and that effective governance is a symptom of competition between each of these interest groups. No one group holds a 'monopolistic' influence over the other, which results in stable competition and a healthy variety of thought groups/pools to contribute to the American 'democracy'.

The second theory of American government is Hyper-pluralism, which is an intensified version of pluralism dictates that, due to the wealth of competing interest groups all vying for power, that government cannot effectively placate to needs of the majority; the people, and that because of this, no effective form of governance can be achieved essentially due to infighting.

The last and determined most accurate description of American government being the aforementioned Elite-Class Theory, which dictates that due to the inherent/symbiotic relationship formed within the power structures of the United States between class and government, that those who produce the most income effectively puppeteer politicians and the otherwise ‘democratic’ institutions to do their bidding, rigging the system to benefit to those who seek for the maximum accumulations of profit while exploiting the working-classes who maintain the very system that created such wealth; capitalism.

It is because of this that capitalism's impact on government cannot be understated, and that the moment capitalism as an economic system was adopted as the predominant method of maximizing the accumulation of profit/ means of production, that the democratic institutions were undermined. Capitalism, as the United States practices, is a system that will eventually burn itself out given its inherent characteristics of hyper-consumerism and competition, which while most effective at stimulating economic growth, will only result in rampant class divide over a prolonged period, inevitably placing those who surface to the top at an advantage over those who are less successful. Karl Marx stated that, “ It appears then, that capitalist production comprises conditions independent of good or bad will, conditions which permit the working-class to enjoy that relative prosperity only momentarily, and at that always only as the harbinger of a coming crisis”, the less fortunate left with little options becoming either an agent for the government, or a peon for those with the most wealth/resources (which is also the government). The divide inherent to this capitalist system creates the very foundation for which democracy can be undermined. While at one point the institutions of American democracy may have been strong/virtuous enough to withstand corruption from corporate influence, it appears that within the modern American political/economic system that this balance has been toppled, if it ever

really existed. Elite class theory, or oligarchy as more commonly phrased is the 'political'/economic system the United States abides by, not democracy. In a nation where the wealthiest pay barely any taxes, hold monopoly over outsourced industry, and continue to lobby for legislation that only increases the wealth divide, the former 'land of equal opportunity' remains at the chokehold of those from previous generations whose successes places them in the advantageous hierarchical position they hold today. Until this cycle is broken, whether one believes the United States is a democratic, pluralist, hyper-pluralist, conservative, liberal, etc. then no real change in the Status Quo will be observed. The systemic issues lie within our economic system, the institutions of governance can be altered outside of this, but only until serious reconsideration/construction of American free-market capitalism takes place.

### **Conclusion**

Doom and gloom aside, the power the people have cannot be understated, given that the very people who uphold such a system are the most exploited. These being the wide majority of working people within the United States capitalist economy. Therefore, any semblance of mass class consciousness may be the 'straw that breaks the camel's back' of an increasingly stretched-thin 'American Empire'. This philosophy of thought is declinism, or the belief that like all former great empires of history, the United States is bound to eventually burn itself out due to overstretched influence, similar to that of the Roman Empire etc. The opposite of this belief being American Exceptionalism, which holds true to the belief in the destined success of the American Experiment, and that the United States with all of its foreign influence, remains a global necessity on the world stage for 'democracy'. As the 21st Century progresses, the fate of the United States is highly uncertain yet the extremes of declinism and exceptionalism cannot adequately foretell what the future holds, history and the current state of affairs can only provide

so much in the ways of allusion to the eventual fate of the American oligarchy. In a perfect world, one can only hope that through education of the American populace, that a revival like that of the Great Awakenings and Enlightenment periods will distort the illusion that pacifies the American public, such as the false sense of democratic participation and equal opportunity. The grim reality however dictates that the American people, unlike within the eras of our grandfather's generation, are beginning to feel mass apathy and be subject to 'class ignorance' willingly or not being a far more accurate a description of the mentality that slowly infects the progressively drowning/exploited working and middle classes. For once the people are subjugated and their faith in their democratic institutions are compromised, the soul of an otherwise once 'democratic' nation that emphasizes political participation rather than division will inevitably drift 'into the night'. A bleak reality for all who wish to feel the impact of their lifetime and contribute their legacy to an *idea* of American democracy. In this case the gravedigger for American democracy is the investor and the corporation, greed corrupting the once virtuous motivations that dominated public thought and political discourse, Though it can be argued that only in times of great necessity, has the American public ever really stepped up to the challenge? It will be seen if the American people can step up an all-encompassing challenge of re-structuring the inherently exploitative system, as the first real expression of true, American, democracy. Maybe then the pursuit of a world that guarantees the prosperity of future generations of Americans can manifest, not subject to corrupt motivations that not only endanger American democracy and security, but the welfare and peace of the world it deems itself a 'necessity' to.



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