

**The 2024 Presidential Election: The Effect on the Status Quo**

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### **Abstract**

Regardless of who wins the 2024 Presidential Election, it seems as though nothing much will change for the United States in the next four years, despite what the news and media outlets may choose to claim. This paper seeks to delve further into this topic, in order to really try and figure out if a Biden win will significantly change the fate of the United States any more or less than a Trump win might. And if not, what is an alternate move that the average citizen could feasibly do to make sure that their vote can change the country's policies? It might even be time for a new system to come into place, one which moves away from the traditional two-party system of the United States in order to make sure that the country has options for other economic and social policies which might suit the tastes of several Americans better.

## **The 2024 Presidential Election: The Effect on the Status Quo**

During election season, we generally tend to hear the phrase that voting comes down to choosing between “the lesser of two evils,” and as the upcoming 2024 presidential election draws nearer, we hear similar sentiments echoed in reference to candidates Joe Biden, the current President of the United States of America, and Donald Trump, the former President. It is increasingly clear to see why several Americans seem to possess a sense of distrust when it comes to politics, as the two men have drawn their fair share of criticisms stemming from their terms in office. Biden has lost supporters resulting from the way the recent Israel-Palestine conflicts have been handled by the Biden Campaign, and as an extension, the United States (Axelrod & Abdul-Hakim, 2024). His predecessor, Trump, had been impeached for his role in the Capitol attack on January 6th, 2021, and simultaneously lost support from several for inciting violence through Twitter.

Yet in spite of the criticisms the two have drawn throughout the years, will it really make a big difference in shaping the United States’ future if one wins over the other? Or is it possible that the seemingly long-standing feud between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party is nothing more than a clashing display of aesthetics, similar to how several Americans brandish merchandise such as jerseys and flags from their favorite football team and cheer them on during the season? This paper will analyze the extent to which the Democratic Party differs from the Republican Party, in order to truly figure out just how much a Biden or Trump win will outweigh the other and change the course of American history. Additionally, this paper will lean into describing third party perspectives and candidates, and to see if any of them ever stood a chance at breaking the endless repetition of Democratic and Republican presidential wins since the end of Civil War.

## **An Introduction to American Elections**

In former President George Washington's farewell address in 1796, the founding father of the country warned the people against the nature of political parties, after witnessing the rise of the Democratic-Republicans and the Federalists. He said of these parties that, "they are likely, in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people and to usurp for themselves the reins of government, destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion." It is clear that he worried for the power of the vote and the common man, after having fought for America's independence from Great Britain, a monarchy which had placed power in the hands of only a few elite (National Constitution Center, n.d.). To some degree, Washington's warning proves to be true for today's world, as we see party loyalty being favored above all else, to the extent where people fear criticism of their party's leaders in order to avoid the opposing party winning an election.

This certainly seems to prove true as suggested by an article from the Washington Post, "Criticizing a president is always okay — even one running against Trump... Biden critics are engaging in essential acts of democracy: showing up and protesting at a political leader's events; slamming him in writing; voting against him in primaries to signal frustration." The article is not blind to how it would be electorally inconvenient for Democrats while making sure to emphasize Trump's faults as a leader, but all the same, remains uncompromising in the opinion that Biden possesses his own shortcomings as well. After all, as the Washington Post's slogan goes, "Democracy Dies in Darkness," and we cannot be silent on certain issues in the argument that Biden is "less evil" than Trump, and thus we have to settle for things we do not agree with

(Bacon, 2024). We have to be willing to call out to our leaders on any faulty decisions they make, in hopes that we can all work together to a better future.

The textbook even goes as far as to say that “Americans accept levels of chronic poverty and homelessness which are not tolerated in democratic Western Europe” which seems to also echo Bacon’s perspective in his article (Heineman et al., 1995, p. 3). In the spirit of party support and not electing the greater of two evils, we cannot simply make a decision for our President and other government leaders as easily as we choose a sports team to support. There needs to be something more which goes into our thought process during election season, in order to break free from the faults of a bipartisan nation, and to truly establish the concept of popular sovereignty once again.

### **Analysis of the Political Compass**

The Political Compass is an online test which seeks to profile political personalities belonging to several forms of democracy, working through the use of two axes. Although this online platform has garnered its own fair share of criticism over the years, it is a simple and accessible way to help the average voter learn which presidential candidate their views might align with better.

The vertical axis measures the social scale of a democracy through the values “Authoritarian” and “Libertarian.” An authoritarian government is best described as a system which places more power in the hands of politicians and the elite, allowing them to govern the lives of those below them. Supporters of this system often believe that the state matters more than the individual. On the other hand, a libertarian government is best described as a system which retains individual freedom and believes in reducing government control and authority over citizens. This system focuses more on the freedom of individuals, as supporters of the system

tend to advocate for minimal state intervention and equality for all (The Decision Lab, 2020). However, the social scale of a democracy is not inherently linked to the economic system utilized by the government. For example, the National Front, also known as the National Rally, is a French political party often described as being far right. However, when closely inspected, the National Front only has a far-right attitude in terms of social attitudes, but instead of a laissez-faire economic approach, the National Front's economic policies has occasionally been described as being to the left of the French Socialist Party due to favoring government intervention and trade protectionism in terms of the trade market and economy (The Political Compass, 2023). This is why we cannot fully rely on measuring a party or democracy's values purely based on its social values, and need another scale in place to measure the economic system and policies.

As a result, the horizontal axis is also a key component of the Political Compass which measures the economic scale of a democracy through the values "Left" and "Right." In terms of economic scale, the Left refers to a system which has typically more progressive views. Leftist economic ideologies typically support higher taxes in order to pay for things like public infrastructure and healthcare while imposing heavy regulations on businesses and corporations. On the other hand, the Right refers to a system constructed on more conservative views. This typically means a system which favors low taxes and decreased government spending on public utilities. Rightist economic ideologies also tend to support businesses and corporations having little government-imposed sanctions and regulations, in order to have a laissez-faire economy (The Decision Lab, 2020). As stated before, the economic system of a country is not reflective of its social attitudes, as a country can be more liberal and freer in some aspects than others. Countries like Uruguay and Switzerland have free market economies, a characteristic of

traditionally Rightist economics, although the two have quite liberal views on social freedoms, demonstrated mainly through their tolerance and inclusion of different groups and acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community (The Political Compass, 2023). Several tend to mischaracterize democracies based on either their economic or social attitudes, but the Political Compass reminds us that one does not affect the other, and it is entirely possible for a country to have a more liberal take on social freedoms than their economic system, and vice versa.

Now that we better understand how the Political Compass works, it may be interesting to learn that both Biden and Trump share the same political alignment as per the chart. Both leaders fall under “Authoritarian Right” on the Political Compass, which essentially means that both support free market capitalism in terms of economics, and both have traditionally conservative attitudes towards social policies. As per the results of the Political Compass, Biden seems to be the antithesis of the values which the Democratic Party stands for in the minds of several American voters, and this begs the question of just how different the two leading political parties are from the other?

### **Traditional Interpretations of the Two-Party System**

Although Biden and Trump share the same political alignment according to the Political Compass, traditional interpretations of their parties have widely differing views. In fact, it may be shocking to the average voter to learn that Biden and Trump support similar policies, as the two presidential candidates seem to spend a decent amount of media time trying to convince the American audience that the other would be a horrific choice to elect as President of the United States for the next four years. So, just how different are the two parties?

The Democratic Party is generally considered to be a liberal, left-leaning political party. As a result, the Democratic Party is often synonymously referred to as the Left in American

media, due to believing in greater social freedoms while supporting increased government intervention in economics and corporate matters. On the other hand, the Republican Party is generally considered to be a conservative, right-leaning political party. As a result, the Republican Party is often synonymously referred to as the Right in American media due to having more restrictive beliefs in terms of social matters relating to things like LGBTQ+ rights and women's autonomy, while also supporting limited government intervention in economics and corporate matters (Britannica, 2022). The two parties are also traditionally believed to have widely differing takes on several economic and social policies. Supporters of the Republican Party are more likely to advocate for a smaller government and view social welfare programs as both a hindrance and intrusion on the lives of private citizens. They tend to oppose government spending, as they are typically very anti-tax and want control over what their money goes into. They also tend to support corporations having less government regulations as a result. They tend not to be as friendly in foreign matters, choosing to demonstrate the United States' militaristic strength in order to show that we are not a force to be reckoned with. Republicans do not support government involvement in education or healthcare either, believing it best for the entities to remain private. They tend to have more conservative viewpoints related to minority groups, women, and other social issues. On the other hand, supporters of the Democratic Party are more likely to advocate for a bigger government, which is much more active in the lives of its citizens. They are active supporters of governments spending a lot of money on the community, in resources such as public education and infrastructure, as well as promoting economic growth in the hope that new jobs will be able to rise as a result. They support a very diplomatic approach when it comes to foreign policy. Democrats believe that the government should fund healthcare and education. They also tend to be more open-minded when it comes to minorities and other



marginalized groups (Nagel, 2023). These are just a few of the many traditional standpoints typically associated with supporters of the Democratic Party and supporters of the Republican Party.

However, regardless of which alignment people end up with after taking the test provided by the Political Compass, several find that their views are neither accurately represented by the Democratic Party nor the Republican Party. Why might this be? As written in the article, “Third Party? America Doesn’t Even Have a Second Party,” the two major parties of the United States are quite similar to one another when closely inspected (Knapp, 2022). The documentary “America’s Two-Party Corporate Duopoly” went further into the issue about the never ending feud between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party being more of a clash of aesthetics than any real policy differences. Despite supporters of the two parties having very different beliefs as noted above, the two parties actually act similarly when it comes to taking any big actions. Essentially, their promises during campaign season didn’t always end up matching what happened when they stepped into office. Both parties support heavy militaristic forces, neither having qualms about funding them to limit Constitutional rights like the freedom of speech. Both parties also have similar stances on foreign affairs, choosing to send our military to meddle in other countries. Additionally, there are matters which the Republican Party have openly supported while the Democratic Party paid lip service for their supporters’ appeasement, and then turned around and did exactly what a Republican would have done had they been elected instead (Second Thought, 2020). It feels very disingenuous to the American public, as several truly believe that there is a vast difference between the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. It is hard to even say that voting comes down to choosing between the “lesser of two evils,” when the two candidates in question are actually quite similar to one another and it seems

that meaningful change will not happen regardless of who wins the election. It begs the question of whether elections are even useful, as America basically seems to be a one-party state at this point.

### **Third Party Perspectives and Candidates**

Since the Democratic Party and the Republican Party seem to be quite similar to one another, save for their color palette and party mascot, what are some of the other options Americans have available to vote for? After all, in spite of America being widely acknowledged as a bipartisan country, it actually does have other lesser-known parties trying to make an influence in today's world. They are actually quite useful in some respects, as "seen with issues like marijuana legalization and same-sex marriage, third parties bring forward those issues the uniparty has to co-opt to remain in power" (Knapp, 2022). Additionally, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party had not been the two parties fighting for control during the initial conception of the United States, as the two parties at the time had been the Democratic-Republicans and the Federalists. There is still hope for a third party to rise to the majority, but it remains to be seen whether the United States can break free of the mold of a two-party nation, and instead have several parties of equal value and supporters.

The Green Party is characterized by four pillars, which are essentially "peace, ecology, social justice, and democracy." Similar to the Democratic Party, this political party is also traditionally known for its progressive stance on several issues as shown through the party's Ten Key Values. These include "grassroots democracy, social justice and equal opportunity, ecological wisdom, nonviolence, decentralization, community-based economics, feminism and gender equity, respect for diversity, personal and global responsibility, and future focus and sustainability" (Matthias, 2024). The Libertarian Party is also known for being quite progressive

in views, similar to the Green Party. This party believes that Americans should have control over their spending and have the option to choose whether or not they even want to pay taxes at all in addition to having quite a liberal approach to social issues relating to drugs and immigration (Libertarian Party, 2019). Key areas of agreement for these two well known “third parties” include defending civil freedoms, supporting peaceful reconciliation and conflict resolution, and both vehemently oppose the two-party system of the United States. However, the two are not exactly the same and have conflicting opinions related to economic policies, environmental issues, and social welfare. In terms of economic policies, supporters of the Green Party tend to “[back] government action in the economy to advance sustainability and economic equality, [demand] robust social safety nets, such as free public education and healthcare, [support] the improvement of workers' rights and eliminating income disparity, [and promote] environmental regulations and the use of renewable energy.” On the other hand, supporters of the Libertarian Party tend to “[encourage] limited government involvement in the economy and free-market capitalism with few restrictions and taxes, [favor] self-reliance and personal accountability, placing an emphasis on fewer government welfare programs, [support] cutting back on government expenditures and rejects corporate subsidies” (Good Party Politics Team, 2023). These two parties are not the only two third parties of the United States, as there is also the Constitution Party, the Freedom Socialist Party, the Christian Liberty Party, the Forward Party, and the Black Riders Liberation Party to name a few. Nevertheless, the Green Party and the Libertarian Party have gained relatively more traction amongst Americans living in the United States today.

Third party candidates also do not seem to possess the same bias to either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party, allowing them to speak more freely without purely coming across

as resentful or biased. Presidential hopeful Jill Stein from the Green Party had criticized Biden and his stance on the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Taking militaristic action against Palestine seems to go directly against the Democratic Party's values of looking for a diplomatic approach to foreign affairs. Stein echoed the sentiment by saying, "Quite simply, Joe Biden needs to pick up the phone and tell Israel to cease and desist from this war being conducted on Gaza, the blockade, the use of starvation as a weapon, the total violation of international law and the conduct of a genocide, which is going on." Supporting Israel's alleged war crimes on Palestine also adds another blemish on the Democratic Party's name, as Israel has been said to be conducting an ethnic cleansing of Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza. As a party which so proudly parades the banner of social justice and freedom on media outlets, it seems somewhat hypocritical of the Democratic Party to support Israel's alleged illegal occupation of Palestine's native land. Since this happened so near election season, some are even stating that "[Biden's support of Israel] is pushing millions of voters to consider the Green Party as an alternative" (Adley, 2024).

However, under usual circumstances, one of the main reasons why third parties such as the Green Party or the Libertarian Party do not have quite the same voter turnout as the Democratic Party or the Republican Party is because people simply may not believe that it is worth "wasting" their vote when election season focuses so much attention on the two-party system of the country. The media is partly to be blamed for this phenomenon, as we tend to see Democrats and Republicans flashed across screens the most when it comes to discussing this country's politics and potential presidential candidates. In spite of having other options to choose from, other presidential candidates never seem to be taken quite as seriously as the major

Democratic candidates or the Republican candidates, as elections are seen as quite a bit of a longshot for third party presidential candidates.

To further explain this claim, the system seems to be rigged against third parties like the Green Party or the Libertarian Party. The Constitution does not allow for a President to win the election through the process of a simple majority vote, instead forming something known as the Electoral College in order for a President to come to power. Essentially, each state is given a set number of votes equivalent to the sum total of its senators and representatives, in order to ensure that even small states will be able to have a large impact on presidential elections. One must receive at least 270 votes, the absolute majority, in order to become President (Forbes, 2012). This makes it difficult for third parties such as the Green Party or the Libertarian Party to come into power, as the electoral college is based on a winner-take-all system, unallowing votes for third parties to hold any substance if they are not the majority of their state. Oftentimes a Democratic or Republican candidate will not have to campaign in certain states which they already know will support them, allowing them to focus most of their time and energy on convincing the majority in swing states to choose them. Meanwhile, third parties do not have quite the same history with any state in the United States, thereby showing how flawed the system can be towards them. Additionally third parties need a substantial amount of finances in order to even have a chance of competing against the Democratic Party or the Republican Party, but such a thing is difficult when the two major parties of the United States have such a long history tied in with several people in the country, and have even gotten funding from lobbyists who know that one of these major parties are their best chance at getting bills passed through Congress. Things like this are what make it notoriously difficult to break the current status quo of the United States.

However, not all hope is lost for third-party candidates as there have been times where someone not from the main two parties had significantly altered the fate of the United States during election season. In the 1992 presidential election, several American citizens voted for independent candidate Ross Perot, thereby allowing Democrat Bill Clinton to win significantly over Republican George H. W. Bush. There have also been several years when “third-party candidates who registered more than 2% in the popular vote” were when the party controlling the White House ended up losing the post of President (Wolf, 2023). If third-party candidates have been able to have this big of an impact, then perhaps it is not too unrealistic to believe that they can gain even greater influence as time grows, and potentially even change the status quo for good.

### **Conclusion**

From the analysis provided in the paper, it seems highly unlikely for the social and economic status quo to be challenged regardless of whether we see a Biden or Trump win in the 2024 presidential election. Although both their parties seem to advocate for very different things in the media, we can see that their ongoing feud tends to be nothing more than lip service in order to win votes from the American public, as both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party tend to pass similar bills in terms of social and economic affairs. The way that the current electoral system is built makes it incredibly difficult for a third party to rise to popularity, since winning the popular vote can mean nothing in front of the Electoral College.

Instead of advocating for popular sovereignty, several of us have also become much too obsessed with the idea of party loyalty, and voting for the same candidates as their forefathers would have supported as well. Instead of thinking about what will truly benefit the citizens of the United States, several become obsessed with seeing either the Democratic Party or the

Republican Party as the enemy, instead of understanding that the real villain is our obsession with a party's brand and aesthetics. It is time for the United States to grow out of its bipartisan nature, in hopes that one day this land will truly be able to support a multi-party nature where everyone's main concern is to build a better nation, rather than retain power with one party over another.

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