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Independents beyond the Two-Party System: Exploring the Role of Third Parties and Alternative Political Movement in American Politics Post Bush' Jr

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Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization

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Declaration

We, ABDELKRIM Halima Saadia and BELARBI Amina, hereby declare that this dissertation entitled, Independents beyond the Two-Party System: Exploring the Role of Third Parties and Alternative Political Movement in American Politics Post Bush Junior, is our original work and have not been published elsewhere.

We assert that all information in this thesis has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic conventions and ethical conduct. We also assert that we have fully cited and acknowledged all materials that are not original to this work. Besides, this work is conducted and completed at the University of M'sila, Algeria.

Dedication

We dedicate this humble work to our parents, families, and friends.

Acknowledgments

First of all, our gratitude goes to Allah the Almighty for enlightening our way and granting us health, patience, and strength to finish this work.

We would like to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to our teacher and supervisor, Mr BENNAA, for his guidance, seriousness, and invaluable support.

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Abstract

In the ever-changing landscape of American politics, the dominance of the two-party system has never been challenged. Yet, an array of independent candidates, third parties, and alternative movements emerged to influence the political discourse in ways that are frequently ignored. These new voices strive to challenge the traditional political system, seeking an electoral success. Therefore, this research aims to explore the major factors that contributed to the rise of independent, as well as investigating the significant challenges that faced in overcoming the traditional two parties. To achieve this aim; this research employs a mixed-methods approach that integrates qualitative and quantitative analysis. The qualitative component will explore the depth of perspectives, while the quantitative methods will examine broader trends and patterns. Based on the evidence provided by this methodology, this research contended that the significant political divisions that the country has witnessed are the main incentives that led to the rise of independent view points and acceptability which correlated with the marginalization of the two parties.

Key words: two-party system, independent candidates, third parties, alternative movements.

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GENERAL

INTRODUCTION

In the landscape of American politics, the dominance of the two major parties, the Democrats and Republicans, has long been the norm. However, beneath this duopoly lies a large number of independent voices, third parties, and alternative political movements seeking to challenge the two major parties and offer diverse perspectives to the electorate.

Historically, third parties and independent candidates have played crucial roles in American politics, often serving as activists for change and advocates for marginalized voices. From the Populist Party of the late 19th century to the Progressive Party of the early 20th century, third parties have championed causes ranging from workers' rights to social justice, introducing new ideas into national discourse and pressuring the major parties to address neglected issues.

In recent decades, dissatisfaction with the two-party system has fueled the emergence of alternative political movements, ranging from the Green Party to the Libertarian Party, each offering unique platforms and perspectives that diverge from the mainstream. These movements have attempted to challenge the existing power structures, advocating for electoral reforms, such as ranked-choice voting and equal representation, to ensure a more inclusive and representative democracy.

Despite their potential to challenge the traditional two-party system, third parties and alternative political movements face major obstacles in the American political scene. The winner-takes-all nature of the electoral system, coupled with restrictive ballot access laws and limited media coverage, often marginalizes these voices, pushing them to the margins of political discourse. Additionally, the established partisan divide and the stigma of 'wasting' one's vote on a third-party candidate pose significant barriers to their electoral ambitions.

However, the growing disillusionment with the major parties and the increasing polarization within American politics has created fertile ground for independent voices to gain support. Movement

like the Tea Party has demonstrated the potential of public activism to influence national politics, challenging dominant narratives and shaping policy debates.

As the United States deals with complex challenges, from economic inequality to climate change, the voices of third parties and alternative political movements are more important than ever. By fostering a more varied political landscape and encouraging diverse perspectives, these entities have the ability to bring meaningful change to the American political system.

Statement of the problem

What is apparent is that third party and independent candidates are overlooked and often marginalized by the traditional two-party system that presents significant challenges to the viability of these movements. In addition, despite the fact that the American political landscape had witnessed the appearance of the third parties and independent candidates several times through history, many discussions of such matter did not tackle this matter again as the American voters appeared to show their dissatisfaction with the two-party system in latest election. Therefore; there is a need for a comprehensive examination of the rise of alternative political movements and the factors that shaped their roles. To address this significant issue in the existing literature, this research aims to evaluate the emergence of third parties and independent voices to offer a deeper understanding of its potential to challenge, influence, and shape the American political system.

Research Questions

This study attempts to answer the following main question: What are the main reasons individuals choose to identify as Independents rather than aligning with one of the two major parties? This question will be answered by introducing these sub-questions: What historical factors have contributed to the persistence of the two-party system in American politics, and what are the major factors that led to the rise of third parties, Independent candidates, and other alternative movements?

Aims and Objectives

This research aims to investigate the historical context and evolution of third parties and alternative political movements in the United States. This research conducts an analysis of the rise of third parties and independent candidate in the American political landscape, as well as to explore the challenges that third parties face in gaining electoral success, and how they navigate these obstacles to remain relevant in the political landscape. This study attempts to assess the impact of third parties and alternative political movements on the broader political landscape, including their influence on policy agendas, electoral outcomes, and public discourse.

Motivation and Significance

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the study of third parties and independent candidates in American politics. The significance of the topic lies in its potential to spark discussions about alternative political structures, promote diversity in politics, address voter disillusionment, and drive political innovation. By examining the role of third parties and alternative political movements, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of American democracy and explore ways to strengthen and reform the political system for the benefit of all citizens.

Literature Review

Many researchers and critics have shown interest in the rise of third parties and other alternative movements. Research on the dominance of the two-party system in the United States is extensive and covers various aspects of its implications, causes, and consequences. Here we are going to talk about some previous studies that provide insights into this topic.

"The Two-Party System and Duverger's Law" by William H. Riker discusses Duverger's Law, which suggests that the plurality voting system tends to produce a two-party system. Riker examines

historical and empirical evidence to support this theory and its implications for the American political landscape.

Duverger's Law suggests that electoral systems characterized by single-member districts and plurality voting tend to produce two-party systems. Riker delves into the historical and empirical evidence supporting this proposition, examining case studies from various countries and periods to illustrate how electoral rules shape party competition and voter behaviour (Riker, 1982).

Riker (1982) also discusses the implications of Duverger's Law for the American political landscape. He examines how the winner-takes-all nature of elections in the United States, combined with the Electoral College system for presidential elections, has contributed to the stability of a two-party system dominated by the Democratic and Republican parties. Despite occasional challenges from third parties and independent candidates, Riker suggests that the structural incentives created by the electoral system make difficulties for alternative parties to gain significant support at the national level.

The rise of independents and alternative political movements in the United States has gained significant attention from researchers and scholars in recent years. "*Independent Politics: How American Disdain for Parties Leads to Political Inaction*" by Samara Klar and Yanna Krupnikov examines the rise of political independence in the United States and its consequences for democratic participation.

Klar and Krupnikov (2016) argue that while many Americans express their rejection for political parties, this attitude often leads to disengagement from the political process rather than meaningful political action. One of the main arguments of Klar and Krupnikov's work is that the rise of political independence reflects a major distrust and disillusionment with traditional political institutions, including political parties. They highlight how factors such as ideological polarization, partisan gridlock, and negative campaign rhetoric have contributed to a decline in public trust in

parties and elected officials. As a result, many Americans consider themselves as politically independent as a way to distance from what they perceive as a polarized political system.

However, Klar and Krupnikov warn that political independence does not necessarily translate into increased political engagement or activism. They argue that while independents may express dissatisfaction with parties and politicians, this feeling often leads to a lack of interest and disengagement from the political process. Rather than directing their frustrations into appropriate forms of political participation, such as voting, activism, or civic engagement, many independents remain on the sidelines, feeling disillusioned and disconnected from the political system.

Moreover, Klar and Krupnikov suggested that the rise of political independence may have negative consequences for democratic governance. They argue that a political system dominated by independents that are disengaged from party politics is less beneficial to effective representation and policymaking. Without strong and organized political parties to combine diverse interests, the political process becomes unstable and less responsive to the needs and the desires of the electorate.

"Third Parties in America: Citizen Response to Major Party Failure" by Steven J. Rosenstone and Roy L. Behr explores the conditions under which third parties emerge and thrive in American politics. They analyze the electoral fortunes of third-party candidates, their impact on voter behavior and political outcomes, and the challenges they face in gaining recognition and support within the two-party system.

One of the central arguments of Rosenstone and Behr's work is that third parties often emerge in response to perceived failures or shortcomings of the major parties in addressing major problems or representing certain country. They examine how factors such as political alienation, dissatisfaction with the two-party system, and the presence of charismatic leaders can contribute to the rise of third-party movements (Rosenstone&Behr, 1984).

Rosenstone and Behr also analyze the electoral strategies and fortunes of third-party candidates in American politics. They examine the conditions under which third-party candidates can

gain support and compete effectively in elections, as well as the obstacles they face in overcoming the structural advantages enjoyed by the major parties. This analysis may include discussions of campaign finance, media coverage, ballot access laws, and the role of political institutions in shaping electoral competition.

Furthermore, Rosenstone and Behr explore the impact of third parties on voter behavior and political outcomes. They investigate whether third-party candidates serve as spoilers, siphoning votes away from major party candidates, or whether they provide practical alternatives for disaffected voters. Additionally, they examine the long-term effects of third-party movements on the ideological landscape and policy agendas of the major parties.

In this review, it is remarkable that researchers and critics studied the issue from different angles. These studies offer valuable insights into the rise of independents and alternative political movements, examining their origins, motivations, organizational structures, and impact on the broader political landscape. They provide a significant understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with alternative forms of political engagement and offer important lessons for scholars, activists, and policymakers alike. Added to this, these studies offer valuable information about the impact of third parties on the political landscape, shedding light on their historical significance, organizational dynamics, electoral strategies, and ideological influences. They provide a valuable understanding of the role that third parties play in shaping political discourse, mobilizing voters, and promoting alternative policy agendas within the context of the American two-party system. Therefore, this study is attempted to analyze the already existing literature by covering the rise of independents.

Methodology

This research will employ a mixed-methods approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the emergence of independent

candidates and other alternative movements. The qualitative component will explore the depth of perspectives, while the quantitative methods will examine broader trends and patterns.

The data of this study will primarily consist of secondary sources, including party platforms, media coverage, existing databases, election results, official reports, and public opinion surveys. The qualitative data will involve the analysis of party platforms, and media coverage to understand the historical context of the dominance of the two-party system and political shifts. This will provide insights into individual experiences, perceptions, and political nuances. The quantitative data will utilize existing databases, election results, and official reports to gather quantitative indicators, and public opinion surveys will also be employed to measure perceptions of independents and alternative political movements.

The data analysis will involve both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative analysis will include thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, themes, and underlying narratives within political discourse obtained from interviews, focus groups, and content analysis of media coverage and party platforms, as well as analyzing coded data to identify encompassing themes and insights into the motivations, goals, and organizational structures of third parties and alternative political movements.

The quantitative analysis will employ descriptive statistics to present demographic information, political beliefs, and engagement levels of survey respondents in a clear and concise manner. It further calculates summary statistics for media coverage, including frequency sentiment analysis and coverage of specific issues related to third parties and alternative political movements.

The study may face challenges in ensuring unbiased representation in survey responses and accessing comprehensive data on political movements, as it may not properly represent the broader public views. Limitations include the generalizability of results since the growth of independent

candidates and alternative movements varies across political surroundings, making it difficult to generalize data to different contexts.

Research Plan

The thesis is divided into two chapters. The first chapter is entitled “Independents beyond the two-party system”. This chapter investigated the emergence of third parties, independent candidates, and alternative movements as challenging entities to the existing political powers in the United States. The chapter started by exploring the dominance of the Republicans and Democrats as major political parties. It further discussed the rise of independents and alternative political movements throughout the American history. The chapter then tackled the challenges that faced the traditional two-party system, including third parties and independent candidates which had a significant influence of the behavior of the American voter.

The second chapter is entitled “Factors Shaping the Role of Independents”. It presented a comprehensive analysis of political and socioeconomic aspects that had a significant impact on the role of the independents. Moreover, the chapter provided analysis of the influence of different strategies including social media platforms, as well as the impact of the independent candidates on public perception and trust. Lastly, the chapter included a discussion of the public agendas that alternative movements followed to gain public traction and support.

CHAPTER ONE:

Independents beyond

the Two-Party System

1. Introduction

“No force acting on mankind has been less carefully examined than party, and yet none better deserves examination” Sir Henry Maine.

The American political landscape is characterized by the dominance of the Democratic and Republican parties. This two-party system has shaped the country's policies, political discourse, and electoral processes for much of its history. However, beyond this system, there exists a dynamic and diverse range of independents and third-party movements. These organizations often arise in response to perceived weaknesses within the major parties, seeking to address issues and represent populations they believe are overlooked or underserved.

Independents and third-party movements advocate for a variety of perspectives including libertarianism and environmentalism to constitutionalism and social justice. They aim to influence policy, shift public discourse, and offer voters alternatives to the traditional party lines. Despite facing significant obstacles, these political candidates continue to contribute to the richness and complexity of American democracy.

This chapter will explore the rise of independents and third party movements and specially focused on the roles of these candidates throughout the American history. The chapter will start by providing a historical overview about the American two-party system. It will further investigate the influence of independents and third-party movements, as well as the challenges posed to the traditional landscape for a comprehensive view of the American political system. The chapter then will discuss the impact of these parties on voter’s behaviour.

2. The Dominance of the Two-Party System

“Political parties play a unique and crucial role in our democratic system of government”

(White&Kerbel, 2022).

Many scholars have defined the term ‘a political party’ from different angles. A political party can be defined as a "group of persons organized to acquire and exercise political power" (Duverger, 2024, March21). A similar definition was provided by Edmund Burke, writing in 1770, he defined a party as "a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interest upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed"(p. 458).

In another definition made by Schattschneider(2017),"a political party is an organized attempt to get control of the government" (p. 59). Therefore, Political parties are effective means to practice democracy. Schattschneider asserts that"the parties, in fact, have played a major role as makers of governments more especially they have been the makers of democratic government" (p. 1). Additionally, Joseph Postell (2018) stated that "the history of political parties reveals that they are the critical mediating institutions that make the American Constitution function well"(p. 2).Meaning that political parties play a crucial role in ensuring the American Constitution's effectiveness.

Throughout American history, the electoral system is characterized by a two-party system. George Anthony and Arthur Carl have defined the two-party system as "a condition or system in which two major parties dominate a political unit. It can also be described as a political system consisting chiefly of two major parties, more or less equal in strength"(Anthony&Carl,2019, p. 18). In this sense, a two-party system consists of the two main parties occupying the political scene. In this system, the electorate predominantly votes for these two significant parties, with one of them typically winning a majority in parliament. Rosenstone et al (1984) stated that "the two-party system in this country is the product of an unspoken pact between the masses and their leaders"(p. 126).Which means that the American citizens vote for the party that would satisfy their desires.

Historically, the United States has been through several party coalitions. The Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans were the first two major parties in the United States' two-party system, which began in the late 1700s. Later, the Democrats and the Whig emerged as rival political ideologies, which led to the Republican and Democratic dominance in the modern era (Anthony & Carl, 2019, Abstract).

Anthony and Carl further noted that since 1852 either a Democrat or a Republican has held the presidency showcasing the enduring influence of the two-party system, which is based on the notion that voters mostly tend to give their votes to merely two principal political entities, within which either of the parties achieve a legislative majority.

Moreover, they argued that the two-party system has a long-standing legacy shaping the country's political landscape for decades. This system has resulted in the persistent domination of Republicans and Democrats, with no third-party candidate getting close to presidential elections. The two-party system has permitted the expression of rival political ideas, encouraging contest and argument at the municipal, state, and federal levels. Anthony and Carl added that the two-party system's legacy encompasses the advancement of political knowledge availability, which simplifies the transmission of political ideas for voters, making complicated subjects accessible to comprehend, as well as creating centrality and enabling political parties to seek an agreement that may contribute to political equilibrium and financial growth.

John H Aldrich wrote a book titled *"Why Parties: A Second Look"* in which he explores the historical roots of the two-party system in the United States, tracing its development from the early years of the Republic to the present day. He examines how factors such as the ratification of the Constitution, the emergence of mass political parties in the 19th century, and the realignment of party coalitions in the 20th century have shaped the structure and dynamics of American politics (2011).

One of the central arguments of Aldrich's work is that political parties are essential for organizing and mobilizing political competition in modern democracies. He highlights the various functions that parties fulfil, including articulating diverse interests, providing information to voters, recruiting and selecting candidates for public office, and structuring the legislative process. By performing these functions, parties help to stabilize and legitimize political competition, facilitating the smooth functioning of democratic governance.

Additionally, he examines the structural factors that contribute to the persistence of the two-party system in the United States. He argues that the winner-takes-all electoral system, combined with factors such as ideological polarization, campaign finance laws, and media coverage, creates strong incentives for voters and politicians to align themselves with one of the two major parties. Aldrich (2011) suggests that the institutional barriers to entry and the strategic advantages enjoyed by the major parties make it difficult for alternative parties to gain significant traction.

Elmer Eric Schattschneider, an American political scientist, wrote a book titled *Party Government*. Schattschneider (2017) highlighted the significance of the two major parties in the United States. He stated that the two-party system has played an important role in alerting the American constitution, unifying and democratizing the complicated structure of governance. He added that the longevity and stability of the Democratic and Republican parties have led to the creation of a plebiscitary presidency and extra constitutional expansion of the presidential office. In addition, Schattschneider believed that a strong party system and a standardized selection procedure are maintained by the winner-take-all structure of the two-party system, which is based on single-member districts.

The Winner Take All system grants all of a state's electoral votes to the presidential candidate who receives a plurality of popular votes. The candidate with the most votes is the winner, with no other candidates receiving any benefits. Currently, 48 states and the District of Columbia use the

winner-take-all approach to allocate electors, with the exception of Maine and Nebraska, which employ the district system (Kpohoué, 2020).

Kpohoué (2020) further added that the shift from various voting methods was driven by realistic political concerns, and the winner-take-all system came up as a result of party pragmatism and the desire to maximize support for favorite candidates. He argued that this system guarantees that the ultimate decision is made by well-informed people who are able to make the greatest choice. This protection attempts to keep minority interests away from being overwhelmed by the majority. He stated that "this winner-take-all system also protects the two-party system by making it difficult for third and fourth parties score electoral votes"(p. 326). Meaning that the winner-take-all system contributes to the stability of the American two-party system by making it difficult for other parties to receive electoral votes. Rosenstone et al (1984) said that "the American presidential election system not only discourages third party candidates from running but provide an incentive for the major parties to squelch third party competition" (p. 43).

For nearly two centuries, the two-party system has served as a center ground in American politics (White&Kerbel, 2022). John Kenneth White and Mathew Robert Kerbel, professors of political science, wrote a book titled *American Political Parties* which discusses the main reasons behind the formation of the two major parties in the US, how they operate, and where they intend to go.

White and Kerbel noted that the Democratic Party was founded by Thomas Jefferson and James Madison in the early 19th century as it advocates Jeffersonian localism, which emphasizes states' rights, focuses on attaining political power, and reflects its political ideas in public policies.

They further added that the Republic party was first established in 1854 by a group of anti-slavery activists with key figures including Abraham Lincoln and Salmon P. Chase. This party

promoted Hamiltonian nationalism and insisted on intensive financing to strengthen the election (White&Kerbel, 2022).

In addition, White and Kerbel argued that the two-party system fosters a middle-ground politics that seek a right chord between individual liberties and national being. Furthermore, they explained that this paradigm creates distinct bounds for political debate, determining the conditions of conflict among the leading parties which enables the establishment of wide coalitions of voters and promotes stability and governance (White&Kerbel, 2022).

3. Emergence of Independents and Alternative Political Movements

In the context of American politics, the supremacy of the two major parties, Democrats and Republicans, has long been acknowledged and no third party could ever enter the electoral race. However, behind this duopoly is a rich tapestry of independent voices, third parties, and alternative political movements working to challenge the two-party system and provide varied choices to the electorate.

Historically, there has never been a third-party presidential candidate in America. Despite this, third-party candidates have frequently run for the position. These candidates receive votes and support, however modest. In a system with only two major parties, these voters are outliers (Rockler, 2013).

Throughout American history, no third party candidate has become a president. However, the American presidential race has witnessed the participation of third party and Independent candidates several times where they reached high ranks.

Collet (1996) stated that the debate over party system instability has taken on a new dimension with the rise of Ross Perot and the growing presence of third parties and independent candidates. Although George Wallace and John Anderson's presidential candidatures in 1968 and

1980 drew attention to current system variations, it wasn't until Perot's unexpected 19 percent showing in 1992 that gaps in two-party defense became completely obvious and alternatives to Republicans and Democrats were effectively considered (Collet, 1996). Meaning that the rise of third parties and other alternatives were not truly taken into consideration until the shocking outcomes of the 1992 elections.

Collet noted that some political experts including Theodore Lowi (1994) and Gordon Black and Benjamin Black (1994) advocate for the establishment of a third major party, highlighting broad public backing for a major alternative. He further added that Ross Perot began making this prospect a reality in September 1995, when he declared the foundation of his Reform Party and initiated an attempt to get it on the ballot in all fifty states. During his speech and efforts to officially establish his party all over the nation, following Lowi and Black and Black attempts, he referred to public opinion polls indicating widespread backing for a third party with sixty-two percent of the American public, as Perot asserted in advertisements and speeches, would prefer a new electoral entity (Collect, 1994).

Collet ended up his article by stating the fact that there is a growing frustration with the two-party system and a willingness to back a third party. However, specific data patterns should be examined. It's worth noting that the public is more opposed to the "system" (the two parties as a whole) than to individual Republicans or Democrats. Support for a third party appears to derive from a desire for more voting options, not a desire to remove existing ones.

Moreover, Ralph Nader candidacy on the Green Party in 2000 and 2004 was another experience that proved the strong existence of third parties. Ralph Nader's role is historically distinctive as he significantly influenced the 2000 electoral race due to his impact on the election's outcomes (Allen&Brox, 2005, Abstract).

Allen and Brox stated that the twentieth century was characterized by Nader's campaign which continued a long history of notable third-party candidatures. In addition, they argued that his presidential campaign was notable for several factors. First, they believed that Nader's participation in 2000 election have harmed Democrat Al Gore's presidential campaign. They further explained that the absence of Nader in the election might have helped Gore to concentrate on important primary voters, which could have enabled him to gain one more state and push him to the presidency. Over and above that, Nader's incredible performance in commonly Democratic areas such as the Upper Midwest and Pacific Northwest required Gore to devote valuable time as well as money to block Bush winning in Wisconsin and Oregon.

Allen and Brox (2005) added that Nader's campaign is one of many prominent third-party presidential candidatures despite receiving only 2.73 percent of the national vote. They continued with mentioning previous elections that included independent and third party candidates such as H. Ross Perot's major obstacles that he posed to the two-party candidates in the 1992 and 1996. After a while, John Anderson received nearly seven percent of the national vote as he ran as a politically balanced alternative to Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter.

Historically, third-party candidates have garnered electoral votes, including George Wallace in 1968, Strom Thurmond in 1948, Robert LaFollette in 1924, and Theodore Roosevelt and Eugene Debs in 1912(Allen&Brox,2005). Therefore, these figures represented the independents throughout most of their history, in which they attempted to gain a high status in the American.

4. Challenges Posed to the Traditional Political Landscape

The traditional political landscape in the United States has been largely dominated by the two-party system, a structure deeply ingrained in American political culture. According to Rosenstone et al. (1984), this system is as established and recognized as the presidency and Congress, with most Americans growing up with a deep familiarity with only the Democratic and Republican

parties. However, significant challenges to this entrenched system have emerged, primarily driven by growing public dissatisfaction and the rise of third-party and independent candidates (Rosenstone et al, 1984).

These shifts indicate that the American political landscape is evolving. While the two-party system remains dominant, the increasing frustration and ideological division among voters suggest that there is a fertile ground for alternative political movements to challenge the current government. This evolution could lead to a more diverse and possibly more representative political environment, reflecting the varied opinions and desires of the American electorate.

The standard political context in the United States, represented in the two-party system, is facing several significant challenges. These challenges are driven by increasing public dissatisfaction, ideological polarization, and the emergence of third party and independent candidates. These challenges can be summarized as follows:

4.1. Public Dissatisfaction with the Two-Party System:

The dissatisfaction of the American public continued to grow as the two major parties started to drift away from their core values. The Pew Research Center's 2022 report highlighted that a significant percentage of the American public is frustrated with the two-party system. This dissatisfaction has been growing over the past few decades, with many Americans feeling that neither the Democratic nor Republican parties adequately represent their interests and values. (Pew Research Center, April 2019)

Many voters feel alienated by the entrenched two-party system, perceiving it as rigid and unresponsive to their needs. This alienation is particularly pronounced among younger voters and those with more progressive or conservative views that do not align with the mainstream positions of the two major parties (Dan Balz and Clara Ence Morse, 2023, web).

Public dissatisfaction with the two-party system in the United States reflects a significant challenge to the traditional political landscape. Factors such as lack of representation, ideological rigidity, a desire for more diverse political options, systemic barriers, and campaign finance issues all contribute to this growing discontent. Addressing these concerns will require substantial reforms to the electoral system, campaign finance laws, and efforts to reduce partisan polarization, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and representative political environment.

4.2. Ideological Polarization:

In recent decades, the growing intellectual gap and political split between major parties and their supporters became more evident.

The work by Rosenstone and colleagues pointed out that Americans have traditionally only learned about the Democrats and Republicans, creating a deep-seated familiarity with these two parties. However, this long-standing familiarity has also contributed to increasing partisan hostility (Samara Klarr, 2016). As voters become more entrenched in their party identities, they are more likely to view the opposing party with suspicion and distrust (Rosenstone et al., 1984).

The 2022 Pew report indicates that partisan hostility has grown significantly in recent decades. Individuals are holding more extreme and divergent views, which have led to a political environment where compromise is rare, and cooperation among parties is increasingly difficult. This growing animosity makes it challenging to address critical issues that require cross-party collaboration (Pew Research Center, April 2019).

According to Gold's research, there is a growing perception of significant ideological differences between the two major parties. This perception causes polarization, as voters increasingly see the other party as fundamentally opposed to their values and interests. The deepening divide means that political discourse often becomes more about defeating the other side than finding common ground, leading to a more divided and polarized electorate (Gold, 2015).

The increasing ideological polarization in the United States is a major challenge to the traditional political landscape. Partisan hostility has increased, making compromise and bipartisan cooperation rare. The perception of significant ideological distinctions between Democrats and Republicans contributes to this divide, as voters see the opposing party as an existential threat to their values and interests. Addressing this polarization will require efforts to foster more moderate and inclusive political dialogue, promote understanding and cooperation across party lines, and potentially reform electoral and political systems to reduce the incentives for extreme partisanship.

4.3. The Rise of Third-Party and Independent Candidates:

This is considered as the major challenge that have faced and continued to face the American two-part system.

The dissatisfaction with the two-party system has led to the rise of third party and independent candidates who seek to offer voters an alternative. These candidates often address issues neglected by the major parties, such as environmental concerns, campaign finance reform, and criminal justice reform. They appeal to voters disillusioned with the status quo, providing a platform for voices that feel marginalized within the two-party system (Levitsky&ZIblatt, 2019).

While third party and independent candidates rarely win major elections, they can significantly influence outcomes. These candidates often draw votes away from the major parties, which can influence the results of closely contested races. By attracting a substantial share of the vote, they can force major parties to address specific issues to recapture lost voters. In some cases, third party and independent candidates have caused major parties to lose key elections by splitting the vote, demonstrating their potential to shape the political landscape indirectly(Navigating the Challenges of the U.S. Political Landscape, 2024).

The rise of third party and independent candidates reflects a growing discontent with the traditional two-party system. These candidates provide viable alternatives for voters who feel

unrepresented by the Democrats and Republicans, focusing on neglected issues and offering fresh perspectives. While their chances of winning major elections remain slim due to systemic barriers, their influence on election outcomes and policy agendas can be significant.

4.4. Structural Barriers and Systemic Challenges:

This is represented in the American electoral system itself with its unique dynamics. The U.S. employs a first-past-the-post (FPTP) electoral system, which tends to favour a two-party system. In this system, the candidate with the most votes wins, even if they do not secure a majority. This often discourages voters from supporting third-party candidates, as they fear "wasting" their vote on a candidate unlikely to win. Instead, voters are more likely to choose the "lesser of two evils" from the major parties, reinforcing the dominance of the two-party system and making it difficult for third-party candidates to gain traction (Noam Lupu, 2015).

Stringent ballot access laws in many states create significant hurdles for third party and independent candidates. These laws often require candidates to collect a large number of petition signatures within a short time frame and pay substantial filing fees. The requirements vary by state but generally favour candidates from the two major parties, who have more established infrastructure and resources to meet these demands. As a result, third-party and independent candidates face significant disadvantages in getting their names on the ballot, limiting their visibility and electoral viability.

Structural barriers and systemic challenges play a crucial role in maintaining the dominance of the two-party system in the United States. The first-past-the-post voting system discourages support for third-party candidates by promoting strategic voting, while stringent ballot access laws create formidable obstacles for these candidates to participate in elections. These constraints reinforce the existing political landscape, making it difficult for alternative voices to gain representation and influence within the American political system. Addressing these barriers through electoral reform

and more equitable ballot access regulations could foster a more inclusive and competitive political environment.

4.5. Influence of Money in Politics:

The use of money in politics had a great impact on democratic processes and governance. Major parties have well-established fundraising networks and greater access to financial resources. This financial disparity allows major parties to dominate media coverage and voter outreach efforts, further entrenching the two-party system. The ability to fund extensive advertising campaigns, hire experienced campaign staff, and organize large-scale events gives the major parties a substantial edge, making it challenging for smaller parties to compete on an equal footing (Sida, 2002, p. 38).

The rise of super PACs and dark money has further skewed the political playing field. Super PACs can raise and spend unlimited amounts of money to support or oppose candidates, often funded by wealthy individuals, corporations, and interest groups. Dark money, which refers to political spending by organizations that are not required to disclose their donors, adds another layer of financial influence. These funding mechanisms enable wealthy donors to exert significant influence over the political process, often drowning out the voices of smaller parties and independent candidates. The lack of transparency and accountability associated with dark money further complicates efforts to level the playing field (Anna Massoglia, web).

The influence of money in politics presents significant challenges to the viability of third-party and independent candidates in the United States. Major parties benefit from established fundraising networks and greater financial resources, enabling them to dominate media coverage and voter outreach. The rise of super PACs and dark money exacerbates these issues, allowing wealthy donors to exert disproportionate influence over the political process and marginalizing smaller parties. Addressing these campaign finance issues through reforms such as public financing of campaigns,

stricter disclosure requirements, and limits on contributions could help create a more equitable political landscape and enhance the viability of alternative candidates.

To sum up, the challenges to the traditional political landscape in the U.S. reflect a complex interplay of public dissatisfaction, ideological polarization, systemic barriers, and financial constraints. While the two-party system remains dominant, these challenges highlight a growing demand for political reform and the potential for a more diverse and representative political environment. Addressing these issues will require significant changes to the electoral system, campaign finance regulations, and efforts to reduce partisan hostility, ensuring that the political system can better serve the needs and aspirations of all Americans.

5. Influences on Voters Behavior

After the rise of third parties and other alternative movements, there was a significant change in voters' behavior. The American voters started looking for an alternative that would represent them properly. As a result, there was a clear shift in their behavior towards the major political parties. Rosenstone et al (1984) stated that "the third party route is a path of last resort"(p, 126).

Rosenstone et al (1984) argued that voting for a third party candidate is an exceptional move for Americans, because their devotion to the two-party system is fundamental to their political existence. Supporting a third party requires voters to reject much of what they have experienced and trained to believe as proper behavior in politics. However, despite this, many continue to pick third-party choices. Every presidential election, some Americans break from the major parties to support alternative candidates. Since 1840, minor parties have received more than 5 percent of the popular vote in one-third of presidential elections. In one out of every five competitions, they have received more than 10 percent of the vote.

Rosenstone et al (1984) further explained that due to the powerful influence of third parties, 14 of the last 36 presidents have entered office without receiving a majority of the popular vote. Over

time, third parties have gained enough influence in crucial states to possibly change the outcome of Electoral College results in around one-third of elections. They stated that "periods of third party strength indicate that the major parties are not representing citizens' political demands"(p. 4). This quote justifies the calls of the citizens for an alternative party that must represent their desires which pushed them to resort to third parties.

The increasing need for alternatives can be noticed by examining the rising percentages of public support for a third party (Collet, 1996). In order to support his view point, Collet used some statistics from different surveys and polls. He argued that Roper survey made in 1938 and 1944 revealed the widespread backing and contentment of the American public with the two-party system which lasted till the sixties, despite the popularity of individuals such as George Wallace and the rise of independent voters .However, by the beginning of the eighties, a drop in support was obvious. In 1994, a minority thought the Republicans and Democrats were doing a good job, while the majority demanded a third major party for the first time.

Collet (1996) added that other surveys have found more acceptance of the notion of a third party. Yankelovich performed Time/CNN surveys with a differently framed question, which resulted in higher satisfaction rates. Agreement for this notion rose from 58 percent in June 1992 to sixty-three percent in October 1992, but then fell to fifty to fifty-nine percent between 1993 and early 1995. However, a comparable test posed by the ABC/Washington Post in late 1995 revealed that general approval had increased to more than sixty percent, while only twenty-five to thirty-one percent declared full backing for the third party.

Collect(1996) further noted that This concept is supported by a following CBS/New York Times survey from December 1995, which enquired about the reasons for people's desire for "a new political party." Seventy-five percent believed that "having more candidates is better for the country," On the other hand, a mere sixteen percent felt uneasy about the quality of candidates offered by the

two major parties. Additionally, contemporary CBS/New York Times polls conducted in April 1996 found that a plurality forty-eight agreed with the statement "having only two parties can't provide voters with enough options."

As previously demonstrated, in certain elections, third and minor parties managed to attract a high number of voters creating a threat to the dominant political parties, while in other contests they barely reached a small percentage that would enable them to enter the White House.

These results reveal the instability in the two-party system and explain the efforts that seek to protect the traditional party system. However, minor parties managed to gain support in each election regardless of the two-party system and the enormous obstacles they face (Rosenstone et al, 1984).

The rise of independents and third-party candidates had a great impact on the American electorate, providing them an alternative to the old-fashioned two-party system. American voters started looking for another choice that would represent them appropriately as well as to make their voices heard.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, while the Democratic and Republican parties dominate the American political landscape, independents and third-party movements play a crucial and often underappreciated role. They provide vital alternatives for voters, raise awareness of neglected issues, and push the major parties to address a broader range of concerns. Despite facing significant hurdles such as the electoral system's inherent biases, stringent ballot access requirements, and limited media exposure, these political entities persist in their efforts to influence policy and public discourse.

The impact of independents and third-party movements can be seen in their ability to shape elections and policy debates, and reflect the diverse views of the American populace. Their presence

underscores the importance of a pluralistic and inclusive political system, one that is capable of evolving and responding to the needs and desires of all citizens. As calls for electoral reforms such as ranked-choice voting gain traction, the potential for these groups to play a more significant role in the future of American politics grows.

Ultimately, the ongoing efforts of independents and third-party movements are a testament to the enduring spirit of democracy in the United States. They remind us that political change and innovation are possible, and that a stable, multifaceted political landscape is essential for a healthy and representative democracy.

CHAPTER TWO:
Factors Shaping the
Role of Independents
Post Bush Junior

1. Introduction:

The two-party system's long-standing supremacy is being challenged by the growing number and importance of independent voters and candidates in contemporary political environments. Independents, those who do not closely identify with one of the two major political parties, are vital in determining the course and dynamics of elections and government. Comprehending the elements that mold the position of independents is crucial to appreciating how modern politics are changing.

Third parties in American politics continued to evolve and emerge as powerful agents reshaping the political landscape and challenging the dominance of the traditional two-party system. These alternative political entities maintain a presence, primarily at local and state levels. According to Karissa Waddick(2024), a Democracy report, she said “Third parties candidates could threaten to tip the scales in a potential match-up between likely Democratic nominee President Joe Biden and Republican frontrunner former President Donald Trump” .It is obvious that the rise of third-party candidates prompts concern among the two major parties, who recognize the potential threat posed by these alternative voices to their longstanding dominance in American politics.

Recently, third parties candidates have captured a great support from people including Robert F. Kennedy Junior, Cornel West, and Jill Stein as they have been influential figures in American politics and could potentially be considered powerful candidates in 2024 election. Kennedy, an environmental lawyer is conceivably the most well-liked third-party nominee for president. According to Marquette Law School Poll, which was conducted in May 2024, the survey found that Trump received 51% and Biden got 49% in a two candidate race. Both Biden and Trump saw their numbers fall by about 10 when third-party candidates were added to the mix percentage points. Trump received 42% to Biden’s 39%, while Kennedy received 15%, with West and Stein taking 5% combined – meaning as many as 1 in 5 voters seem open to casting a third-party ballot.

In addition to Kennedy, Jill Stein is also considered as a powerful third-party candidate in the 2024 election. Her candidacy could be a threat to Biden in crucial swing states. According to Desai et al “she is the only third-party candidate with ballot access in most states. This is what matters if you’re going to be actually elected, rather than just being popular” (2024). Since 2012 presidential elections, Jill Stein emerged as a prominent third-party candidate representing the Green Party. Despite her campaigns' relatively modest vote totals compared to major party contenders.

There was always a complex interaction between social, political, and economic factors that support the emergence of independent voices in 21th century. Independent candidates negotiate a challenging landscape where values clash with institutional realities. However, independents carve out their position in this furnace of potential and challenge by using media platforms, community involvement, and forward-thinking policy agendas to pique voters' interest.

Therefore, this chapter explores the factors that led to the rise of minor parties and the impact of independents in American politics during the George W. Bush's presidency, ranging from societal shifts to electoral regulations, and their implications for the democratic process. The second part of this chapter will provide insight into the variety of tactics and media strategies used by third-party candidates to acquire traction and threaten the Democratic and Republican parties' dominance, and gain people trust which encompasses the faith that voters place in these candidates to represent their interests, uphold their values, and fulfill their campaign promises.

2. Independents Post Bush Junior

The existence and power of third parties have frequently been interpreted in American political history as a sign of discontent with the two-party system. Even while the Democratic and Republican parties have long dominated American politics, there have been times in history when other political parties have gained popularity and challenged the status quo, giving citizens a different voice. One such instance occurred under George W. Bush's presidency (2001–2009), which led to the

rise of third parties. Third-party candidates had an opportunity to emerge as credible alternatives as political polarization increased, dissatisfaction with traditional parties simmered, and important policy problems dominated public attention.

According to Pomper (2001) “the election of 2000 has raised troubling questions about the stability of American government generally” (p 201). The emergence of third parties in American politics under the George W. Bush administration was a sign of a country struggling with severe political divisions and dissatisfaction with the two-party system. People looked for alternatives to the Democratic and Republican parties as they failed to address their main concerns.

3. Factors shaping the Role of the Independents

The role of independent voters in American politics represents a powerful phenomenon in U.S. politics. Their numbers are growing as more voters disassociate themselves from the Republican and Democratic parties. In this exploration, we uncover the complex relationship of political, socioeconomic, and cultural factors that shaped the rise of independent voices, as they have faced a complicated landscape where values conflict with institutional realities, from disillusionment with partisan polarization to the pursuit of honest leadership and responsive representation.

3.1. Political and Socio-economic Factors

The role of independent voters and candidates in political landscapes is intricately woven into the fabric of political and socioeconomic dynamics. In a world marked by rapid changes and evolving ideologies, understanding the interplay between political structures and socioeconomic conditions is vital to understand the emergence and impact of independent voices in the political arena.

3.1.1. Political Factors:

In the early 2000s, the political landscape of the United States witnessed a notable interest and support for third parties, marking a significant departure from the traditional dominance of the Democratic and Republican Parties. This period was characterized by a confluence of political, socioeconomic, and cultural factors that fueled the rise of alternative political movements, challenging the long-standing duopoly of the two major parties. The emergence of minor parties in this period was fueled by opposition to policies such as the Iraq War and exacerbated by deepening political polarization.

During George W. Bush's administration, the United States saw profound changes in politics and division. The political environment in America experienced significant changes due to polarizing overseas interventions and divisive home policies, which led to the emergence of third parties as a form of alternate representation and opposition. "Partisanship has been growing stronger in recent years. In Washington, Democrats and Republicans seem farther apart than ever, unable to bridge their differences even when the public demands it" (Pew Research Center, 2007).

From the disputed 2000 election to the aftermath of the September 11 attacks and the ensuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the political landscape became increasingly divided along party lines. This polarization was evident in both domestic policy debates and foreign affairs, shaping the trajectory of Bush's presidency and leaving a lasting impact on American politics.

The rise of third parties in the United States during the George W. Bush administration was a response to a perceived government dysfunction that encompassed political polarization, governance failures, and dissatisfaction with the two-party system. As HarmenRockler (2013) said: "Third party voters also tend to dislike government, in general. They are more likely to feel disenfranchised by the political process". However, the government still faces such criticism due to its perceived failure to effectively address key domestic issues. Despite efforts to enact policies aimed at tackling healthcare access, income inequality, education reform, environmental protection.

The events of September 11, 2001, marked a seismic shift in this landscape, catapulting the United States into a new era defined by heightened security concerns, military interventions abroad, and debates over the proper role of American power on the world stage.

Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, civil liberties in the United States experienced a significant shift as the government implemented various measures in the name of national security. While these measures were intended to protect the nation from further attacks, they also raised concerns about the erosion of fundamental rights and freedoms. The USA PATRIOT (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism) Act (2001), which was enacted shortly after the September 11 attacks, expanded the authority of law enforcement agencies to investigate suspected terrorists. It granted the government increased powers to conduct electronic surveillance, obtain access to personal records, and detain individuals deemed as threats to national security. Critics argued that the act infringed upon constitutional rights such as privacy and due process.

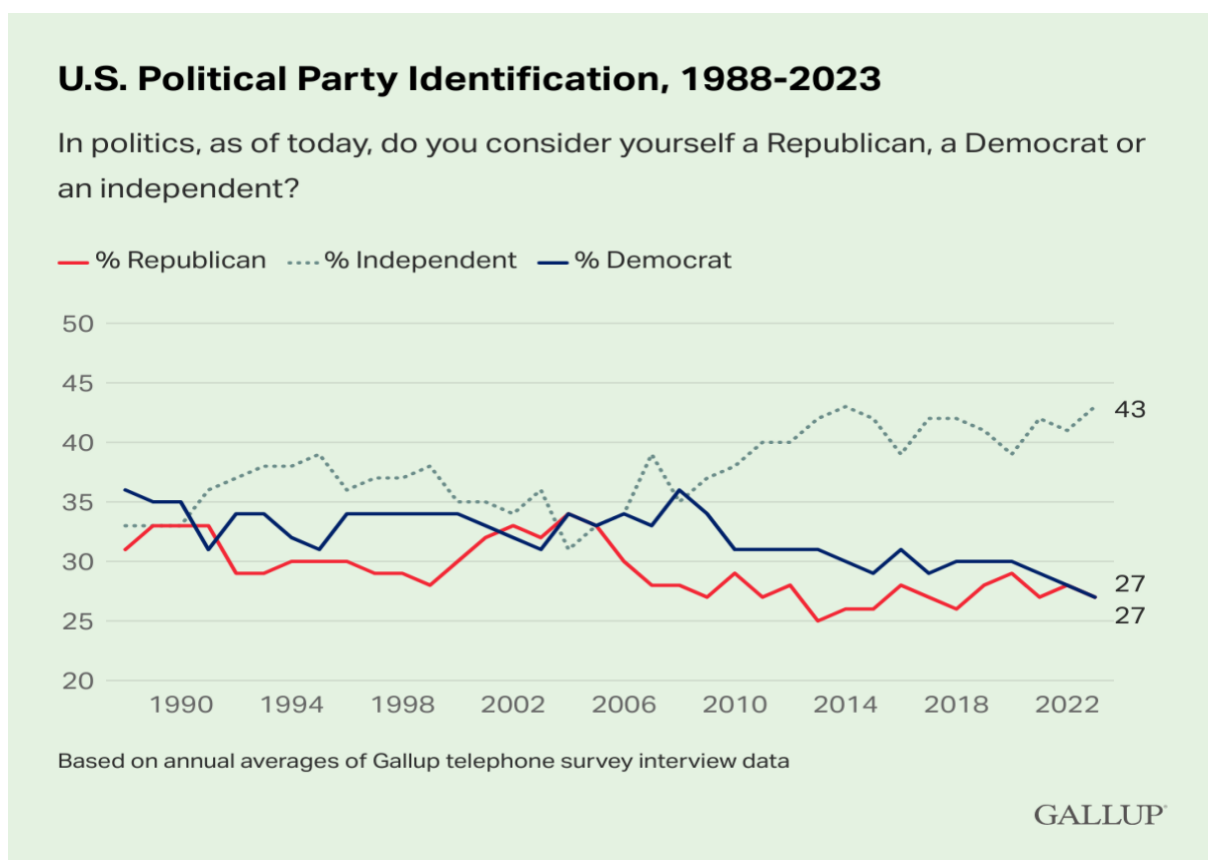
In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the United States embarked on a series of military campaigns, most notably in Afghanistan and Iraq, under the banner of the "War on Terror." These interventions sparked intense debate and controversy, both domestically and internationally, and fundamentally altered the trajectory of American foreign policy. The American politics changed directly after these attacks and it includes major events such as war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, initiated in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks, marked a significant turning point in American politics and society. These conflicts not only reshaped the geopolitical landscape but also had profound effects on domestic politics, including contributing to the rise of third parties. While the direct causal link between these wars and the emergence of third-party movements may not be straightforward, they undoubtedly fueled discontent with the two major parties, the Republicans and Democrats.

Moreover, the substantial financial resources allocated to fund the wars raised questions about government priorities. As the wars drained the national treasury, some voters began to question the wisdom of allocating such vast sums to military endeavors while pressing domestic needs, such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, remained unaddressed. This discourse encouraged support for third parties advocating for different spending priorities.

Therefore, the prolonged and costly nature of the wars led to widespread disillusionment among the American public. Many citizens felt betrayed by the government's handling of the conflicts, which eroded trust in the two major parties and created an opening for alternative political movements.

The data from Gallup surveys (2024) shows an uprising interest in favouring independents candidates rather than the other two major parties recently. This interest is driven by a strong desire for change and a search for an alternative that would represent the public properly.



These data highlights the fact that internal conflicts and instability within major parties or dissatisfaction with party leadership may push voters towards independent candidates who offer a departure from entrenched party politics.

3.1.2. Socio-economic Factors:

Widening wealth gaps and disparities in access to opportunities can fuel discontent with traditional political establishments, prompting support for candidates outside the mainstream. Rosenstone et al stress the importance of ensuring that candidates are well known in presidential elections. They provide evidence that suggests that candidates who are nationally prestigious are more likely to receive votes than less well-known candidates are (Rosenstone et al, 1984).

Moreover, advocating for marginalized groups or pressing social concerns, through grassroots movements, can energize support for independent candidates who share their priorities and beliefs. According to Rosenstone et al. (1984), socialist-leaning immigrants were more likely to vote for minor parties between the early 1900s and 1920s. “As their proportion of the electorate rises 1 percent, third party support goes up .5 percent”(Rosenstone et al,1984. p. 175).

Rosenstone and colleagues' observation from 1984 sheds light on ahistorical period in American politics when socialist-leaning immigrants were more inclined to support minor party candidates. The early 1900s to 1920 marked a period of significant social and political change in the United States. Immigration rates surged during this time, with many immigrants arriving from countries with strong socialist movements, such as parts of Europe.

Socialist ideologies resonated with some immigrant communities, particularly those who had experienced economic hardship and social inequality in their home countries. These immigrants often brought their socialist leanings with them to the United States and sought political representation that aligned with their beliefs.

Rosenstone and colleagues observed that during this period, socialist-leaning immigrants were more likely to cast ballots for minor parties. These parties, often representing socialist or progressive platforms, provided an alternative to the two major parties and appealed to voters who felt marginalized by mainstream politics. The support of socialist-leaning immigrants for minor parties likely influenced the broader political landscape during this era. While minor parties may not have achieved widespread electoral success, their presence and advocacy for socialist principles contributed to political discourse and policy debates.

It's worth noting that political dynamics evolve over time, and the factors influencing voter behavior can vary across different historical periods. During the early 1900s to 1920, socialist-leaning immigrants may have been more inclined to support minor parties. However, political preferences and alignments can shift in response to changing social, economic, and cultural conditions.

Rosenstone confirms while age was found to be a factor in third party voting, with certain age groups more likely to support third parties, race was not found to have a significant relationship with third-party voting behavior. The data indicates that a majority of third-party supporters were white, with 91.6 percent of respondents voting for a third party belonging to this racial group. This suggests that white voters are more inclined to support third parties compared to other racial groups (Rosenstone et al, 1984).

In addition to white voters, a small percentage of black and "other" racial group voters also supported third parties, comprising 2.9 percent and 5.4 percent of third-party voters, respectively.

The analysis highlights that black voters exhibit a strong allegiance to the Democratic Party, with 91.5 percent of black respondents voting for the Democratic Party. This high level of support for the Democratic Party among black voters may contribute to the relatively lower support for third parties within this racial group. The slight difference in support for third parties among black voters

compared to white voters may be attributed to the historical alignment of black voters with the Democratic Party and the perception of third parties as less viable alternatives (Rosenstone et al, 1984).

Overall, the analysis suggests that while age may be a factor in third-party support, race did not significantly influence third-party voting behavior. However, the strong allegiance of black voters to the Democratic Party may contribute to lower levels of support for third parties within this racial group.

Understanding the interplay between political and socioeconomic factors is essential for political strategists, policymakers, and candidates seeking to appeal to independent voters and address their concerns effectively. Independents play a crucial role in shaping electoral outcomes and driving political change, making them a key constituency in American politics.

3.2. Media and Communication Strategies

Media and communication strategies are vital threads in the complex tapestry of contemporary politics, helping to tell the story of political campaigns and shape the public's opinion of political figures. These tactics are vital lifelines for survival and success for independent candidates navigating the crowded field dominated by established parties. They are not merely instruments for attracting attention.

Independent candidates use different platforms, narratives, and engagement strategies to carve out space, amplify their voices, and resonate with voters amid the cacophony of partisan politics. By dissecting the nuances of media influence and communication techniques, we gain insight into the dynamic interplay between independent candidates and the electorate, shedding light on the strategies that elevate them from the margins to the forefront of political discourse (Rosenstone, Steven J. Hansen, John Mark., 1993).

Media and communication strategies are pivotal in shaping the role of independent candidate in politics.

3.2.1. Media Influence:

Media, in its various forms, holds a profound influence over societies worldwide. Media plays a crucial role in assisting third parties by amplifying their voices, raising awareness about their causes, and mobilizing support from the public. Through various platforms such as television, newspapers, and social media, third parties, including grassroots movements and humanitarian organizations. Media coverage helps to shine a spotlight on issues that may otherwise go unnoticed, providing a platform for marginalized communities to share their stories and advocate for change. Concerning the general impact of the use of social media on political participation, some researchers have arrived at their conclusions that the use of social media relates positively to political participation (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2012).

Independent candidates often lack the extensive resources and established platforms of major parties. Thus, leveraging media channels, including traditional outlets like newspapers, television, and radio, as well as digital platforms such as social media, becomes essential for increasing visibility and reaching potential supporters.

In the 21st century, media visibility and exposure have become essential tools for third parties seeking to amplify their voices, raise awareness about their causes, and mobilize support for their initiatives. With the proliferation of digital communication platforms and the evolving media landscape, third parties, including grassroots movements, advocacy groups, and humanitarian organizations, have unprecedented opportunities to engage with audiences and catalyze social change.

Participation in debates is crucial for third-party candidates to gain visibility and exposure, as these events offer a platform to articulate their platforms and ideas to a wider audience. During

the 2016 U.S. presidential election, third-party candidate Jill Stein of the Green Party sought to participate in the nationally televised presidential debates alongside major party candidates Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump. Stein and her campaign team argued that her inclusion in the debates was essential for ensuring that voters had access to diverse perspectives and policy alternatives. As she appeared on Fox news and said: “I look forward to getting into the debates so the American people can hear the full story,” However she failed to be in the debate and she blamed it on media coverage and how media focus only on the two major parties (Jamieson, 2016).

In addition, public events and rallies are essential components of third-party campaigns, providing opportunities for candidates to connect directly with voters, share their platforms, and generate media coverage. In the 2020 U.S. presidential election, third-party candidate Howie Hawkins of the Green Party utilized public events and rallies to engage with voters and promote his progressive platform. Throughout the campaign season, Hawkins and his campaign team organized a series of rallies and town hall meetings in cities and towns across the country, attracting supporters, volunteers, and media attention. One notable event in Hawkins' campaign was a rally held in a major metropolitan area, where he delivered a speech outlining his vision for a Green New Deal, Medicare for All, and other key policy initiatives. The rally featured live music, guest speakers, and interactive activities, creating a vibrant and inclusive atmosphere that resonated with attendees.

Hawkins delivered a passionate speech, highlighting the urgency of addressing climate change, income inequality, and corporate influence in politics. He emphasized the need for bold, transformative policies to create a more just and sustainable society, rallying supporters to join the Green Party's grassroots movement for change. Through public events and rallies like this one, Howie Hawkins and the Green Party were able to engage with voters, mobilize supporters, and elevate their campaign's visibility during the 2020 presidential election. These events served as crucial opportunities for Hawkins to connect with voters, share his platform, and build momentum for his

candidacy, despite facing challenges as a third-party candidate in a highly polarized political landscape.

Independent candidates may face challenges in gaining favorable coverage from mainstream media outlets, which often prioritize established party candidates. Crafting compelling narratives and messages that resonate with journalists and the public can help independents garner attention and shape their public image. Stein was the Green Party nominee for president in both 2012 and 2016. Her campaigns focused on progressive issues such as climate change, healthcare reform, and social justice. While Stein did not achieve significant electoral success, her candidacy helped to amplify progressive voices within the political landscape and push the Democratic Party to adopt more left-leaning policies.

Furthermore, Independent candidates often turn to alternative or independent media sources that may be more receptive to their perspectives and less influenced by partisan biases. Engaging with these platforms allows independents to reach niche audiences and cultivate support among like-minded individuals (Rosenstone et al, 1984).

Alternative media has emerged as a transformative force, reshaping the dynamics of third-party engagement and influence. Unlike traditional mainstream channels, alternative media platforms offer a diverse array of voices and perspectives, providing third parties with unprecedented opportunities to reach and resonate with audiences. As Gary Tang stated in his article named Social media and social mobilization that “online alternative media favor the spread of ‘oppositional knowledge’ that can facilitate critical political discussion. Previously, the so-called ‘political knowledge’ was measured according to one’s knowledge about public figures inside the establishment and their understanding of the operation of the government” (Tang, 2018, p189).

Some examples of alternatives media includes:

- **Podcasts:** Third-party candidates often appear on podcasts to discuss their platforms and engage with audiences. For instance, Libertarian Party candidates like Jo Jorgensen and Gary Johnson have been guests on podcasts such as "The Joe Rogan Experience" and "The Tom Woods Show," where they have had the opportunity to articulate their policy positions and reach audiences beyond traditional media outlets.
- **Independent News Websites:** Third-party candidates may publish op-ends or be featured in interviews on independent news websites. For example, Green Party candidate Jill Stein has contributed articles to outlets like Truth out and Democracy Now! Where she has discussed her policy proposals and criticisms of the two-party system.
- **YouTube Channels and Video Essays:** Third-party candidates may create their own YouTube channels or collaborate with content creators to reach audiences through video content. For example, Howie Hawkins, the Green Party's presidential candidate in 2020, appeared on YouTube channels like The Humanist Report and The Rational National to discuss his platform and critique mainstream political discourse.

3.2.2. Communication Strategies

Communication strategies in third parties refer to the deliberate plans and tactics employed by these political entities to effectively convey their messages, engage with audiences, and achieve their political objectives. Given the limited resources and visibility compared to major parties, third parties often rely on strategic communication to maximize their impact and differentiate themselves in the political landscape.

Third parties often emerge as beacons of change, focusing their efforts on addressing specific local issues that may otherwise slip through the cracks of the dominant political discourse. These parties, distinct from the entrenched realms of Democrats and Republicans, serve as platforms for grassroots movements and niche concerns, championing causes that resonate deeply within their

communities. As the Libertarian party seeks for a world of Liberty, they focus also on local problems such as; Securing Liberty, as it was mentioned in their platform: “The protection of individual rights is the only proper purpose of government. Government is constitutionally limited so as to prevent the infringement of individual rights by the government itself. The principle of non-initiation of force should guide the relationships between governments” (Libertarian Party, 2018).

Furthermore, alliances with like-minded individuals, organizations, and advocacy groups can amplify the reach and impact of independent candidates' campaigns. By collaborating with diverse take holders, independents can broaden their base of support and mobilize resources for their electoral efforts (Rosenstone et al, 1984).

Independent candidates often exhibit flexibility and innovation in their communication strategies, capitalizing on emerging technologies and unconventional tactics to stand out in crowded electoral landscapes. Embracing new media platforms, creative campaign events, and guerrilla marketing tactics can help independents break through the noise and capture voter attention. Adaptability and innovation are indispensable attributes for third parties striving to carve out a meaningful presence in American politics. Adaptability entails the capacity to swiftly adjust to shifting circumstances, whether in response to evolving public sentiment, changing electoral dynamics, or emerging issues. Meanwhile, innovation demands a willingness to explore new strategies, embrace novel technologies, and propose creative solutions to entrenched problems. Together, these qualities empower third parties to navigate the complexities of the political landscape, remain responsive to the needs of their constituents, and effectively challenge the status quo entrenched by dominant political forces.

Overall, media and communication strategies are instrumental in shaping the visibility, messaging, and electoral success of independent candidates, allowing them to overcome barriers and effectively compete in political arenas dominated by established parties.

4. Public Perception and Trust:

Public opinion and trust are the currency of legitimacy in politics, providing politicians with a solid platform on which to launch their campaigns and successfully negotiate the challenging electoral landscape. For self-reliant Building a positive reputation and winning over voters is not only difficult but also strategically crucial for candidates, who frequently lack the institutional support and party ties of their rivals in established parties. This explanation explores the factors that influence how voters see independent candidates and the tactics they use, delving into the intricate relationship between public perception, trust, and the success of independent candidates to foster confidence in a hostile and politics atmosphere. By examining the dynamics of perception and trust, we gain valuable insights into the unique challenges faced by independent candidates and the pathways they traverse to earn the confidence of voters and carve out their place in the political landscape.

4.1. Transparency:

Transparency is paramount for third parties to establish trust and credibility with voters. It entails a commitment to openness, honesty, and clarity in all aspects of operations and decision-making processes. When third parties are transparent, they provide voters with valuable insight into their actions, policies, and practices, fostering confidence and accountability.

“...Minor parties have historically performed many of the same function as the major parties. They provide symbols for citizen identification and loyalty, educate and mobilize voters, select and campaign for candidates for office, aggregate and articulate interests, raise issues, advocate and help to formulate public policies, organize the government, provide loyal opposition, institutionalize political conflict, and foster political stability. As their relative status indicates, minor parties tend to be less adept at performing many of these roles than are their major party counterparts...” (Herrnson&John Clifford Green, 2002, p 39).

In the dynamic landscape of political trust and accountability are paramount; the selection of third parties by voters depends greatly on perceptions of reliability and consistency. Third parties offer alternative platforms and ideologies. As Paul mentioned in his book “Minor parties have raised issues that have been ignored or inadequately addressed by the major parties during many key junctures in American history”(Herrnson& John Clifford Green, 2002, p 39).

Moreover, media portrayal plays a significant role in shaping public perception of independent candidates. Positive coverage that highlights their qualifications, platform, and achievements can enhance their credibility and visibility. Conversely, negative framing or bias in media reporting can undermine trust and cast doubt on an independent candidate’s suitability for office.

In essence, public perception and trust are pivotal for independent candidates seeking to overcome the challenges of running outside the traditional party structure. By fostering authenticity, integrity, and engagement with voters, independents can cultivate a positive image and earn the confidence of the electorate.

5. Policy Agendas and Alternatives

In the vibrant tapestry of democratic politics, policy agendas and alternatives serve as the backbone of political discourse, offering voters a glimpse into the visions, priorities, and solutions proposed by candidates. For independent candidates, who often operate outside the confines of traditional party structures, the formulation and articulation of distinct policy platforms are not just strategic imperatives but fundamental to their identity and appeal. Policy agendas and alternatives are central to the appeal and effectiveness of independent candidates in politics.

5.1. Differentiated Policy Platforms: Independent candidates often develop policy agendas that differentiate them from mainstream party platforms. By offering alternative solutions to pressing

issues, independents appeal to voters dissatisfied with the policy options presented by major parties. These platforms may focus on niche issues, innovative policy proposals, or pragmatic approaches that resonate with specific segments of the electorate.

5.2. Localized and Community-Centered Policies: Independent candidates often emphasize localized and community-centered policy priorities that address the unique needs and concerns of their constituents. By championing grassroots initiatives and advocating for community empowerment, independents demonstrate a commitment to responsive governance and grassroots democracy.

5.3. Innovative Policy Solutions: Independent candidates may offer innovative policy solutions that challenge conventional wisdom and break free from entrenched partisan ideologies. By proposing fresh approaches to complex issues, independents demonstrate creativity and pragmatism, appealing to voters seeking bold leadership and effective governance.

5.4. Responsive Representation: Independent candidates often pledge to provide responsive and accessible representation to their constituents. Their policy agendas may include initiatives to increase civic engagement, improve constituent services, and ensure that diverse voices are heard in the policymaking process.

5.5. Adaptability and Flexibility: Independent candidates are often nimble and adaptable in responding to emerging challenges and changing political dynamics. Their policy agendas may evolve based on feedback from constituents, new information, or shifts in the political landscape, demonstrating a willingness to listen and learn from the communities they seek to represent.

In summary, policy agendas and alternatives are essential components of independent candidates' appeal to voters. By offering differentiated policy platforms, emphasizing nonpartisan problem-solving, and prioritizing localized and community-centered policies, independents

demonstrate their commitment to responsive governance, innovation, and accountability, enhancing their viability and appeal in electoral contests.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of independent candidates in politics is multifaceted, shaped by a combination of factors including political, socioeconomic, and media-related influences. As we've explored throughout this discussion, independents offer a unique alternative to the traditional party structure, presenting differentiated policy agendas and alternatives that resonate with voters disillusioned with partisan gridlock and ideological rigidity.

Through authentic communication strategies, a focus on accountability and transparency, and localized policy priorities, independent candidates strive to earn the trust and support of the electorate. By emphasizing responsiveness to community needs, fostering grassroots engagement, and advocating for innovative solutions to complex issues, independents demonstrate their commitment to effective governance and principled leadership.

As we look to the future of politics, independent candidates are poised to continue playing a significant role in shaping the political landscape, challenging established norms, and championing the interests of diverse communities. Their ability to offer fresh perspectives, bridge divides, and mobilize support around common-sense solutions underscores the importance of independent voices in promoting a more inclusive, responsive, and dynamic democratic process.

In navigating the complexities of contemporary politics, embracing the contributions of independent candidates enriches our collective understanding of governance, citizenship, and the pursuit of the common good. As we strive to build more resilient, equitable, and vibrant societies,

independent candidates serve as catalysts for positive change, reminding us of the enduring power of democracy and the transformative potential of individual agency in shaping our shared future

General Conclusion

The United States' political landscape has been characterized by the dominance of two major parties, the Democrats and Republicans. However, throughout American history several minor parties appeared, each representing a diverse array of ideologies, interests, and movements. These third parties, often emerging in times of social upheaval or ideological discontent, have played pivotal roles in challenging the status quo, advocating for marginalized groups, and pushing forward innovative policy agendas. These parties offer a voice to groups and ideologies often overlooked by the major parties. Therefore, this research aimed to explore the main reasons individuals choose to identify as Independents rather than aligning with one of the two major parties. This research also examined how the dissatisfaction with the status quo, frustrations with the political establishment, and the desire for greater representation can motivate voters to seek alternatives outside of the traditional party system.

The first part of this work offered insight about the dominance of the two major parties and the emergence of third parties in the United States political landscape. The chapter explores the historical origins of these minor parties in the United States and how they emerged in reaction to the failure of the two major parties, the Democrats and Republicans. Furthermore, it aims to highlight the major challenges that faced the two-party system, as well as to understand the voters' behavior towards third parties and independent candidates.

The second chapter investigated the factors that led to the rise of the third parties in the 21st century. This part examined various social, economic, and political conditions that created opportunities for third parties to emerge and also investigated the role of media strategies and coverage in shaping the success of third parties in the United States. This chapter also mentioned the strategies they employ to garner visibility and influence public opinion and their trust.

Therefore, this study concluded that in the United States, third parties emerge as alternative political response to perceived deficiencies and ideological gaps within the dominant Democratic and

Republican parties. It portrayed how the platforms and policies of these parties' failure create a space for third parties to emerge and gave a chance to independent candidates to emerge.

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ملخص

في المشهد المتغير باستمرار للسياسة الأمريكية، لم يتم تحدي هيمنة النظام الثنائي الحزبي أبداً. ومع ذلك، ظهرت مجموعة من المرشحين المستقلين، والأحزاب الثالثة، والحركات البديلة للتأثير على الخطاب السياسي بطرق يتم تجاهلها في كثير من الأحيان. تسعى هذه الأصوات الجديدة إلى تحدي النظام السياسي التقليدي، بحثاً عن النجاح الانتخابي. لذلك، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف العوامل الرئيسية التي ساهمت في صعود المستقلين، وكذلك التحقيق في التحديات الكبرى التي واجهتها في التغلب على الحزبين التقليديين. لتحقيق هذا الهدف؛ تستند هذه الدراسة على منهجية متعددة تجمع بين التحليل النوعي والكمي. سيستكشف المكون النوعي عمق وجهات النظر، بينما ستفحص الأساليب الكمية الاتجاهات والأنماط الأوسع. بناءً على الأدلة التي توفرها هذه المنهجية، ترى هذه الدراسة أن الانقسامات السياسية الكبيرة التي شهدتها البلاد هي الحوافز الرئيسية التي أدت إلى صعود وجهات النظر المستقلة والقبول الذي ارتبط بتهميش الحزبي .

الكلمات المفتاحية: النظام الثنائي الحزبي، المرشحون المستقلون، الأحزاب الثالثة، الحركات البديلة.