

**Party Crashers:  
Third Parties in an American Two Party System,  
1912 - Present**

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## **ABSTRAKT**

Bakalářská práce stručně popisuje vznik a vývoj amerického politického systému i jeho dvou největších stran, přičemž je kladen důraz na úřad prezidenta. Dále se zaměřuje na fungování tohoto systému s ohledem na třetí strany a jejich roli v politickém systému dvou stran. Hlavní část práce uvádí vybrané příklady, jak prezidentští kandidáti třetích stran ovlivnily americkou politickou scénu v posledních sto letech.

Klíčová slova: Spojené státy americké, prezidentství, politický systém dvou stran, třetí strany, Demokráté, Republikáni

## **ABSTRACT**

The thesis briefly describes origins and development of an American two-party system as well as two major parties. Emphasis is laid on the presidency and presidential elections. The thesis is also focused on the two-party system in connection with the role of third parties in it. Core of the thesis is an analysis showing how third party and independent presidential candidates influenced American politics in last one hundred years.

Keywords: the United States of America, presidency, two-party political system, third parties, Democrats, Republicans

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## INTRODUCTION

If there is a nation with an unshakeable and stable political system of two parties, it is the United States of America. This country was seemingly predestined for the two-party system since its birth. Since the 1850s, the American political scene has been dominated by two major parties – Democrats and Republicans. Nowadays, partisanship is the part of the American society and most of the Americans identify themselves either as Democrat or Republican. American nation is politicized and polarized.

Apparently, there is no more room for anybody else. However, party for two is time to time crashed by an uninvited guest – third party or independent candidate. Unfortunately, Democrats and Republicans think that three's a crowd and they let newcomers to feel their unfriendliness very soon. During the years, two major parties created hostile environment for third parties and their candidates.

Nevertheless, third parties emerge and play important role in the American system. They can, and usually do, influence two major parties or even the system itself in several different ways. And the one, who can influence politics of the superpower like the US, can influence the politics of the whole world.

But what did create the American two-party system and what does help to preserve it? Why are third parties emerging and dying again and again? And how third parties and independent candidates actually influence the American politics? This thesis is trying to answer these questions on the following pages.

# 1 THE ORIGINS OF AMERICAN POLITICS

## 1.1 Colonial Period

Like in other parts of the world, British colonies in North America had their own local governments and to a certain extent even independence in decision making. These local governments were formed according to the English model. Since Magna Charta in 1215, England, back home, always has had to balance three powers; a monarch who was represented by the hereditary crown, aristocracy represented by the House of Lords and common people represented by the House of Commons. Naturally, English rulers strived to introduce the similar model overseas. Therefore in the head of each American colony stood a governor appointed by an English monarch, the House of Lords was represented by a Privy Council and the House of Commons by a colonial Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

However, this analogy could never work fully in the New World for several reasons. First, governors were not only appointed by the English monarch but they were also usually born in England and thus not warmly accepted by American colonists. Second, members of Privy Councils were not aristocrats at all and they could be dismissed anytime contrary to the independent Lords in England. Third, English authorities perceived colonial Assemblies as merely provincial councils with limited powers while American colonists understood Assemblies almost equal to the House of Commons in London.<sup>2</sup>

Also introduction of British laws in American colonies was not without serious difficulties. American colonies presented a different society and environment than Great Britain. Simply, whereas British model of government worked very well in England, on the other side of the Atlantic produced incongruity and many strifes.

In 1763, the Seven Years' War, known as the French and Indian War in America, was over. Britain defeated France, gained Canada, Florida and other territories and thus ostensibly strengthened her position in the North America. Nonetheless, trying to compensate war expenses English king Edward III imposed high taxes on overseas colonies.<sup>3</sup> Problems and disagreements of that time went deeper and deeper. American

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York: Vintage, 1970): 8-133.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Vladimíra Dvořáková, Blanka Říchová, Jiří Kunc, Jan Škaloud, Martin Jeřábek, *Komparace politických systémů I*. (4th ed. Praha: Oeconomica, 2005): 161.

opposition against British rulers became more organized. Resistance was unified under a slogan “No taxation without representation.” Economic adversary of American colonies along with the rise of colonial Assemblies in the second half of the 18th century increased existing tensions and that eventually led to the First and Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia and Declaration of Independence in 1776.

## 1.2 Uncertain Beginnings

Creation of the American political system during and after successful Revolutionary War can be characterized especially by two features; an aversion to everything what resembled the English king or aristocracy and also necessary making of compromises.

### 1.2.1 No More King in America

Strong opposition against the king and aristocracy meant direct democracy, very short terms of politicians and in any case no hereditary office.<sup>4</sup> Strong centralized government in those days would too much remind British oppression. Hence thirteen colonies, or rather states in that time, formed a loose confederacy with the federal government having practically no executive power. Congress could neither control taxation nor regulate trade. Consequently, the federal government did not get any money and was dependent on subsidies. The early American system logically caused chaos and economic problems. France was not even willing to loan money to such a strange and meaningless institution such as American Congress was. The loan was offered directly to George Washington. Congress made only one decision with the federal validity and it was concerning just new army uniforms. Changes had to be made.<sup>5</sup>

Eventually, Convent in Philadelphia in 1787 adopted the new Constitution. The federal government has been made superior to state governments. Therefore state laws can be repealed by federal one. The loose confederacy became a federation. The Constitution of 1787 also returned to the colonial tradition of a government with legislative, executive and judicial branch.

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<sup>4</sup> Governors were elected only for a one year term.

<sup>5</sup> Dvořáková et al., *Komparace politických systémů I*: 165-166.

### 1.2.2 The Compromises that Built America

The first compromise meant bicameral Congress.<sup>6</sup> Congress had to balance the representation of small and large states. Therefore American Congress has two chambers. In the lower house, the House of Representatives, the number of seats per state is proportional to state population to please the states with large population. In the Senate, every state has two seats, regardless the number of people living in the particular state. Every state is equal in the American Senate.<sup>7</sup>

The next compromise had to be made between the North and the South. Black slavery, which was tactically omitted in the first texts of 1776,<sup>8</sup> was gradually dying out in the populous North. However, slavery was still the major part of economy in the Southern states. Until the new draft of the Constitution, slaves were legally property rather than people. But it was decided that each slave would be counted as three fifths of the person. This, practically overnight, mounted the population of the Southern states together with their representation in the House of Representatives. Moreover, Congress could tax import but not export, which simultaneously enabled to keep low prices of the southern agricultural export and protect northern manufacturers from the cheap import by tariffs.<sup>9</sup>

### 1.3 George Washington's Presidency and the First Parties

George Washington was unanimously elected on 6th April 1789. During his inauguration in New York, he was celebrated and by many Americans perceived as a quasi-king. George Washington was not elected because of his opinions or policy, he was elected simply because of the person who he was. Washington was an extremely popular and experienced commander who long time before he led the American Revolution as a chief commander, fought under the British command in the French and Indian War. Washington's initial popularity cannot be compared to any other following American president. Nevertheless, Washington accepted the post of the president rather unwillingly. He understood the presidency as a duty, not the chance to seize power. Washington's importance for American politics is given by the fact that America still felt the specter of absolutistic rule of the English king. Ergo, the final draft of the American Constitution pays more

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<sup>6</sup> The only outstanding supporter of unicameral Congress was Benjamin Franklin.

<sup>7</sup> David Mauk, John Oakland, *American Civilization* (4th ed. New York: Routledge, 2005): 104-105.

<sup>8</sup> Dvořáková et al., *Komparace politických systémů I*: 163.

attention to the process of election and dismissal of the president than to presidential executive powers. In the American system based on precedents, Washington's decisions and behaving determined the course for all his successors.<sup>10</sup>

Inspired by his military career, George Washington surrounded himself with intellectually brilliant co-workers. The first Cabinet, clear analogy to the War Council, had four members. Washington's trustworthy officer, Alexander Hamilton, became the Secretary of the Treasury. Thomas Jefferson, the author of the Declaration of Independence, was chosen to be the Secretary of State. Ministry of War got Henry Knox who was serving under Washington from Bostonian blockade to Yorktown and finally Edmund Randolph was responsible for the ministry of Justice. In addition, James Madison became speaker in the House of Representatives and advised Washington on judiciary and executive powers. John Jay was chosen by Washington to be chairman of the Supreme Court and John Adams was elected the Vice-president.<sup>11</sup>

However, closer to the end of Washington's first term, ideological differences among men in the Cabinet came to light and became even greater. Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, two men who held the two most important offices in the country after the presidency, deeply disagreed over fundamental issues. Each of them represented a different pole of the American society. Discrepancy between Hamilton and Jefferson personified the struggle in the American nation which have been going through its history; the strong federal government against the independent state government, the North against the South and also pro-French against pro-English approach. This fight embodied the forces which shaped the United States.

Alexander Hamilton as the Secretary of the Treasury endeavored to put a young country out of financial misery. Hamilton enforced high taxation and his general idea was to bring America to prosperity by supporting the industry and relying on capital of wealthy people. Of course, Hamilton found supporters especially in New York and New England. His adherents were called the Federalists because they also demanded the superior federal government.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, during 1790s when the French Revolution culminated and the

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<sup>9</sup> David Mauk, John Oakland, *American Civilization*: 104-107.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph J. Ellis, *Jeho Excellence George Washington* (Praha: BB/art s.r.o., 2006): 187-209.

<sup>11</sup> Jürgen Heideking, *Američtí Prezidenti* (Praha: Prostor, 1999): 60-61.

<sup>12</sup> Franz Herre, *George Washington Prezident u kolébky velmoci* (Praha: Brána, 2001): 229-230.

United States was balancing between the open conflict either with France or with England, Hamilton tended towards the pact with England.<sup>13</sup>

On the other side stood Thomas Jefferson, diplomat who spent several years in France and openly advocated the French Revolution. Jefferson and his Democratic Republicans were criticizing Hamilton's fiscal program saying that it destroys the heritage of 1776. Swelling executive was likened to British monarchy, north bankers to new kind of aristocracy and the federal government to imperial power dealing with states as they were mere colonies. Jefferson skillfully shifted a feeling of economic adversary in some parts of the USA to patriotism close to same in 1776. Democratic Republicans fought for the interests of Southern agrarian states. They wish Virginia to be an economic center of the Union.<sup>14</sup>

Despite George Washington was a Virginian and farmer like Jefferson, he rather supported Hamilton's policy which filled the national treasury.<sup>15</sup> Not only that Washington and Hamilton concurred in matters of economy but Washington considered the strong federal government to be vital for American survival. Jefferson understandably disagreed with both Hamilton and Washington but he never publicly attacked popular Washington. That would be a political suicide.<sup>16</sup>

However, George Washington always tried to calm quarrels between Hamilton and Jefferson. And Washington is still regarded as the first and the last American president who was not a member of any political party. In spite of the Washington's striking similarity of opinions with the Federalists, he was against political parties. Washington's Farewell Address of 1796 was a warning against partisanship which he understood as a threat to the nation.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, Washington could not stop the natural process of creation of political parties in America. John Adams, the Vice-President and later the second American President, was ardent Federalist. Although the first modern political party with its own platform, campaigns and rallies did not appeared until 1830s, dispute between Hamilton and Jefferson in 1790s is regarded as the root of the two-party political system in America.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Jürgen Heideking, *Američtí Prezidenti*: 66.

<sup>14</sup> Joseph J. Ellis, *Jeho Excellence George Washington*: 239-240.

<sup>15</sup> Franz Herre, *George Washington Prezident u kolébky velmoci*: 231.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph J. Ellis, *Jeho Excellence George Washington*: 203-242.

<sup>17</sup> Jürgen Heideking, *Američtí Prezidenti*: 68.

<sup>18</sup> Joseph J. Ellis, *Jeho Excellence George Washington*: 203-242.

## 1.4 Development of the Parties

Washington's successor, John Adams, nominated by Federalist was an admirer of the British Constitution and dreamt about the monarchist republic. Adams won the presidency by a narrow margin and Jefferson, who placed second, became automatically the Vice-president. Therefore presidential election of 1796 put two men with contradictory ideas into one government. This is clear evidence that the American Constitution was not prepared for political parties.<sup>19</sup> Change came with 12th amendment.<sup>20</sup> Since 1804, the President and the Vice-president are elected on separate ballots.<sup>21</sup> Although Adams regarded himself as a nonpartisan standing above the parties, his attitude brought Adams problems, especially at the time of tense foreign situation. Southern Democratic Republicans threatened by succession in the case of war with France, while radical the Federalists, where Grey Eminence, Alexander Hamilton,<sup>22</sup> was pulling the strings, blamed Adams for hesitance and concessions. Understandably, John Adams failed in the re-election and the breach of the Federalists had come. Even the next president, Thomas Jefferson, claimed to be a nonpartisan as well as John Adams both of them relied on their political adherents and awarded them by high offices. Thomas Jefferson<sup>23</sup> and John Adams died on the same day, 4 July 1826, exactly 50 years after the Declaration of Independence.<sup>24</sup>

Problems in the old parties deepened in the following years. James Madison, fourth president and Jeffersonian, constituted a very weak and average cabinet in effort to satisfy

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<sup>19</sup> Jürgen Heideking, *Američtí Prezidenti*: 73-80.

<sup>20</sup> This Amendment resulted from the election of 1800. Democratic Republican candidate, Thomas Jefferson, tied with his Vice-president candidate, Aaron Burr. The tie threw the election to the House of Representatives, controlled by the Federalist. The House of Representatives had to choose one of them. Election process in the lower house was very lengthy but representatives eventually decided for relatively moderate Jefferson compared to wild and ambitious Burr.

<sup>21</sup> *About America: The Constitution of the United States of America with Explanatory notes* (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Programs, 2004): 75-76.

<sup>22</sup> Alexander Hamilton was mortally wounded on 11 July 1804 in the pistol duel with the incumbent Vice President Aaron Burr. Hamilton died one day later. The duel was the climax of the long conflict between the Democratic Republicans and the Federalists. Burr was charged with murder because dueling was already outlawed in New York and New Jersey where duel took place. However, charge never reached a trial. Burr escaped and shortly lived on the west. Eventually, Aaron Burr went back to New York where he practiced law. He died in 1836.

<sup>23</sup> Jefferson's presidency was contradictory. Author of Declaration of Independence was also a slaveholder. Unlike George Washington, Jefferson did not free all his slaves even after his death. Possible explanation can be Jefferson's huge debt. Furthermore, in economic issues, Jefferson's decisions paradoxically accelerated early American industrialization. Especially his trade embargo on England and he also quite willingly accepted proposals of road and canal constructions.

<sup>24</sup> Jürgen Heideking, *Američtí Prezidenti*: 73-97.

different regional factions inside the Democratic Republicans. The Federalists were almost dissolved and therefore other Jefferson's friend, James Monroe, quite easily became the next president. In spite of his nomination and election by the Democratic Republicans, Monroe followed example of George Washington as the nonpartisan president. Thus the fragmentation of parties continued and problems became personal. In the presidential election of 1824 stood already only one party – Democratic Republicans. On the other hand, one party had four different candidates fighting against each other. In this election, which had to be decided in the House of Representatives, succeeded John Quincy Adams.<sup>25</sup> New president just personalized shattered American political stage when he turned back to England and thus went against one of the basic Jeffersonian ideas. Quincy Adams eventually lost all his political support and all chances to be reelected.<sup>26</sup>

## 1.5 The Birth of the Modern Partisanship

The birth of the modern two-party system in America can be traced back to the presidency of Andrew Jackson (1829-1837). Jackson was a commander who became a national hero in the War of 1812 in the battle of New Orleans. Politically inexperienced, but popular Jackson defeated Quincy Adams by an overwhelming majority. Party which was quickly formed around Jackson was called the Democratic Party and claimed direct lineage from the Jeffersonians.<sup>27</sup> Jackson was the first president who did not come from the east coast political elite. He was the “man of the people.”<sup>28</sup> Andrew Jackson's idea was to give the people an opportunity to directly elect as many officials as possible at a regional as well as a state level. This idea quickly gained momentum with universal white male suffrage coming in 1820s and 1830s to nearly all states of the Union. Elections of this scale required an organization which political parties appropriately provided. Soon, individuals joined parties more often to increase their chances to be elected for the office.<sup>29</sup> Therefore Jackson's presidency brought true politicalization of the American society.

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<sup>25</sup> John Quincy Adams was the oldest son of the second President John Adams.

<sup>26</sup> Jürgen Heideking, *Američtí Prezidenti*: 99-131.

<sup>27</sup> *Outline of U.S. History* (U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Programs, 2005): 116.

<sup>28</sup> Jürgen Heideking, *Američtí Prezidenti*: 135-147.

<sup>29</sup> Dadalos.org, “The development of political parties in the USA,” <http://www.dadalos.org/int/parteien/Grundkurs4/usa/entwicklung.htm> (accessed September 4, 2010).



Jackson's political opponents formed a new party as well. The party was called Whigs. They fought for united banking and monetary system, infrastructure and protective tariffs. On the other hand, issue of slavery divided them. Eventually, the law about Kansas and Nebraska of 1854<sup>30</sup> definitely split Whigs to the northern part demanding official denial of slavery and to the southern pro-slavery part. Political vacuum was filled soon. In that time various political groups and movements came together and formed the second modern major party in America. Part of former Whigs, Free soilers,<sup>31</sup> abolitionists, nativist Know Nothing Party together with fighters against alcohol gave ideological base to the Republican Party in 1854.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Kansas and Nebraska Act of 1854 repealed the Missouri Compromise of 1820 that regulated slavery in the new western territories. Citizens of Kansas and Nebraska could now choose whether their states would be slavery states or not. This possibility created a room for negotiations, fights and therefore deepening crisis of Whigs.

<sup>31</sup> Free Soil Party was founded by the former Democratic president Martin Van Buren. Free Soilers were predominantly the Democrats opposing slavery. This party brought the issue of slavery into American politics.

<sup>32</sup> Jürgen Heideking, *Američtí Prezidenti*: 207-211.

## 2 BLUE STATE, RED STATE

### 2.1 The Democratic Party

The first significant realignment of the Democratic Party, since its establishment, brought the Civil War. Democratic Party which had dominated American politics until the 1850s suddenly found itself in crisis. Democrats were in dispute over states' rights and split into the northern and the southern wing.<sup>33</sup> In addition, they were labeled as “the party of the South” that lost the war. Consequently, the Democrats were able to win only four presidential elections, while the Republicans won twelve between 1868 and 1928.<sup>34</sup>

The Great Depression at the end of the 1920s brought the second Democratic realignment. The Republicans underestimated the impact of the economic crisis on the American society and their platform reflected mood of the nation quite insufficiently. On the other side, Democratic presidential candidate Franklin Delano Roosevelt called for the active role of the state in boosting the economy. FDR's New Deal proposed several social and employment programs which attracted especially working class and black minority; groups which previously voted for the Republicans. The New Deal era has changed political map of the United States and the Democrats developed their power basis producing majority in the following years.<sup>35</sup>

Nowadays, Democratic Party is regarded as a centrist or a left-oriented party. They advocate money control and government regulation of business. Democratic Party is more likely to support social policies and minorities. The Democrats tend to be also more liberal to issues such as abortion and gay rights. They support higher investment in renewable and alternative energies. One of their priorities was the ending of campaign in Iraq.<sup>36</sup> Since 1840s, the Democratic Party has sought its voters among immigrants.<sup>37</sup> Therefore the Democrats are traditionally voted by many Catholics, Jews and nationalities which brought these religions. However, most of Latinos and Afro-Americans currently vote the Democrats because of their economic situation, rather than because of their origin.

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<sup>33</sup> Jürgen Heideking, *Američtí Prezidenti*: 201.

<sup>34</sup> Dadalos.org. “Characteristics and development of the two-party system,”

<http://www.dadalos.org/int/parteien/Grundkurs4/usa/merkmale.htm> (accessed September 4, 2010).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Dadalos.org, “Parties and elections in the USA,”

[http://www.dadalos.org/int/parteien/Grundkurs4/usa/us\\_parteien.htm](http://www.dadalos.org/int/parteien/Grundkurs4/usa/us_parteien.htm) (accessed September 4, 2010).

The Democrats present themselves as a "people's party" fighting for democratization, freedom and progress. They claim to be followers of Jefferson, Jackson, Wilson and the second Roosevelt.<sup>38</sup>

## 2.2 The Republican Party

The Republican Party was born during the political, economic and social crisis of the Union. In the presidential election of 1860, more than 80 percent of the eligible voters came to cast their vote and decide about the future of the United States. Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln<sup>39</sup> won by a huge margin. It meant only one thing; Union will be preserved at any cost, even the Civil War. North and the Republican Party<sup>40</sup> were clear political winners of the Civil War and in the following years they gave the course to the nation.<sup>41</sup>

The contemporary Republican Party is relatively conservative and on the right of the political spectrum. Republicans stand up for family values. They believe that strength of the nation lies within the individual and that every individual is created equal. Therefore everyone should have equal rights, opportunity and equal justice. Policy of laissez-faire gives the Republicans ground for advocating the free enterprise, a small state apparatus but also the capital punishment. The traditional explanation of the second Amendment that every citizen has the right to bear arms determines Republican gun policy. The Republicans represent the interests of medium and big-sized businesses and residents of the suburbs and many in agriculture.<sup>42</sup> Typical Republican voter tends to have WASP (White, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant) origin.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Jürgen Heideking, *Američtí Prezidenti*: 171.

<sup>38</sup> Dadalos.org. "Characteristics and development of the two-party system," <http://www.dadalos.org/int/parteien/Grundkurs4/usa/merkmale.htm> (accessed September 4, 2010).

<sup>39</sup> Abraham Lincoln became politician during Andrew Jackson's presidency and he was a typical self-made man as well as Jackson. Lincoln shared Jackson's sympathy to common people, but he had very different opinion about states' rights. Furthermore, Lincoln and Republicans, with exception of abolitionists, did not want to abolish slavery in the South. Republicans wanted to stop spreading of slavery in newly gained territories.

<sup>40</sup> The Republican Party called itself the Union Party during the Civil War. Reason is evident and was solely tactical.

<sup>41</sup> Jürgen Heideking, *Američtí Prezidenti*: 207-211.

<sup>42</sup> Dadalos.org, "The development of political parties in the USA," <http://www.dadalos.org/int/parteien/Grundkurs4/usa/entwicklung.htm> (accessed September 4, 2010).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

### 2.3 Organization of American Parties

The American party system works differently than in other parts of the world. In the Czech Republic, for example, structure of parties and the election process is more or less described in the Constitution. Parties are usually well-organized with given hierarchy. In government, the leader of the party is usually the prime minister. Reversely, no part of the American Constitution refers to political parties. The party apparatus is by no means well-organized. Instead, American parties are made up out of numerous local party committees. These local committees, with no official leaders, operate independently and cooperate in loose coalitions. Nearly all candidates label themselves as Democrats or Republicans but the party does not control their campaigns or the policies they advocate.<sup>44</sup> Parties are not really apparent until the elections when local committees come together. After elections parties fragment again.<sup>45</sup>

### 2.4 Regional Differences

The United States stretches from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from Canada to Mexico. In spite of the one flag, more than 350 million people live in fifty very different states. Two major political parties must be therefore loosely organized comparing to the parties existing in the Europe. They must be sufficiently broad to include many ethnic, religious, economic and other interests to appeal as many people as possible. This is necessary step towards winning the presidency.<sup>46</sup> It is important to understand that regional differences are reflected to the national politics as well. Major parties often have the great fights within and fragmentation means that the Republican from the Wall Street is totally different to the Republican from the rural part of Texas. That applies to the Democrats as well.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> David Mauk, John Oakland, *American Civilization*: 114.

<sup>45</sup> Dadalos.org, "Parties and elections in the USA,"

[http://www.dadalos.org/int/parteien/Grundkurs4/usa/us\\_parteien.htm](http://www.dadalos.org/int/parteien/Grundkurs4/usa/us_parteien.htm) (accessed September 4, 2010).

<sup>46</sup> Aaron Wildavsky, "The Goldwater Phenomenon: Purists, Politicians and the Two-Party System," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Jul., 1965), 390. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1405566> (accessed: September 14, 2009).

### 3 AMERICAN TWO-PARTY SYSTEM

The United States of America is more than the century and half governed by either the Democrats or the Republicans. This political stability is really unique, especially for the democratic country with free elections. However, America, despite the Founding Fathers truly despised political parties, was predestined to bipartisanship since its very beginning. The United States has had always to strike a balance between two opposite opinions. Nevertheless, two opposing views cannot be enough for a creation of the stable political system, much less for such a diverse and large country as the United States of America is.

#### 3.1 Theory of the Political Systems

Contrary to many other constitutions in the world, neither the Articles nor the Amendments of the American Constitution mention political parties. Nonetheless, appearance of political parties is natural and logical process which is automatically coming with democratization of industrial countries and general enfranchisement. People with same opinions, whether in parliament or outside of it, come together and form a party which helps them to push their ideas forward. Furthermore, it is also easier for the voters to identify themselves with a particular party, instead of politicians who come and go.<sup>48</sup>

On the other side, number of the parties in one country is to a certain extent given by a law. It is the Duverger's law. In 1954, French political scientist Maurice Duverger came up with the theory that the electoral system determines the number of the parties in the political system. Duverger claims that the proportional electoral system gives every party, which overcomes the minimum popular vote limit, representation and thus the proportional system encourages more and relatively radical parties to enter the political competition. On the other hand, the first-past-the post system, also called the winner-takes-all system, which is employed in the US, gives no benefit to those who place second or worse. Result of the first-past-the-post system is the formation of two major parties that are dealing with wider scale of issues and represent wider spectrum of potential voters.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> David Mauk, John Oakland, *American Civilization*: 111.

<sup>48</sup> Maximilián Strmiska, Vít Hloušek, Lubomír Kopeček, Roman Chytilék, *Politické strany moderní Evropy* (Praha: Portál, 2005): 9-13.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-72.

Clear evidence of the Duverger's law can be found in Australia. Australia employs two different electoral systems. Even if the first-past-the post system is not applied, Australian members of the lower house are elected by complex preferential voting which in connection with the other specific features of the Australian system, such as compulsory voting, creates two-party politics. At the same time Australian senators are elected by a typical proportional voting system which encourages larger number of smaller parties, so they can participate in policy making. Nowadays, seven different parties are represented in the Australian Senate.

However, American historical dualism and the first-past-post electoral system cannot explain long dominance of the Democrats and the Republicans and stability of the American political system. On the other side of the Atlantic, there is ostensibly traditional two-party politics employing the first-past-the-post election system of the United Kingdom of Great Britain. Nevertheless, it can be no longer regarded as the two-party system. British Conservative Party and the Labourists have to lately deal with another party. Liberals are continually strengthening since the 1970s. On the other hand, Spain employs the proportional system but as a whole, Spanish voting system helps to two major parties and undermines smaller ones. Consequently, Spanish system is a representative of the weaker form of bipartisanship.<sup>50</sup> Next example would be Mediterranean country Malta. Maltese political system provides substantial bonus to secure the victorious party total majority. This creates the very strong two-party system.<sup>51</sup> In conclusion, the first-past-the-post system to a large extent defines the two-party political system but external forces and additional laws make it stronger or weaker.

### **3.2 Being Third in an American System of Two**

Foundation of a new party and entering the political competition in America is not an easy task at all. Comparing to the Czech Republic where three Czech citizens need just to reach a legal age, find thousand petitioners and write statutes of the new party. The new party is registered and ready to enter the election within 15 days. Everything is free of charge.<sup>52</sup> Walk in the park, from the American point of view. Political newcomers to the American

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 642-645.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 633.

<sup>52</sup> Zákon o politických stranách č. 424/1991 Sb., Vznik strany a hnutí §6.

two-party system of the United States have to face several challenges. One has to embark on an uncertain quest full of institutional barriers, setbacks, various unfavorable laws and prejudices.

### 3.2.1 Hardships of Third Parties in America

During the years, the American two-party system developed the very effective way to protect itself. It is not as much problem to register a new party as it is to enter viably the political competition. The Democrats and the Republicans have constructed the perfect maze of rules and regulations for third parties.

#### 3.2.1.1 Ballot Access

Since the end of the 19th century the American elections employ so-called Australian ballot.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, the issuing of the ballot has become official matter of each state as well as decision who and on what conditions can appear on the ballot.<sup>54</sup> Nowadays, third party and independent candidates have to gather specific number of signatures in every state to secure their place on the ballot while the Democrats and the Republicans have their spot on the ballot ensured.<sup>55</sup>

Fifty states of the Union mean fifty different requirements. Hundred signatures can be enough in some states while over forty thousand petitioners are needed in others. For instance, every presidential third party candidate who wanted to appear on all fifty ballots in 2008 election needed to collect 690,000 petition signatures. This is huge number considering that no third party presidential candidate got this many votes in preceding election of 2004. Moreover, required data of petitioners are different in every state as well.<sup>56</sup> Additionally, the petition can circulate only in the specific periods of time before the elections. Not only the last date but also the first date when petitions can be distributed is

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<sup>53</sup> Australian ballot is a secret ballot with pre-printed ballot papers with the name of the candidate. This ballot originated in Australia in 1850s.

<sup>54</sup> Barry C. Burden, "Ballot Regulations and Multiparty Politics in the States," *Cambridge University Press PS: Political Science & Politics* (October, 2003), 669-672. <http://journals.cambridge.org> (accessed August 25, 2010).

<sup>55</sup> Roy L. Behr, Edward H. Rosenstone and Steven J. Lazarus. *Third Parties in America*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984): 24.

<sup>56</sup> Barry C. Burden, "Ballot Regulations and Multiparty Politics in the States: 669-671.

given. These periods vary in almost every state. For example, in some states the petition must be completed even before the presidential candidates of major parties are known.<sup>57</sup>

Ballot access restrictions clearly pulverize the effort of the third parties. While the Democrats and the Republicans planning their campaigns and strategies, making their TV spots and ads, third parties have to focus on the collecting of signatures.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, this endeavor to overcome ballot restrictions can be very costly. Third party candidate Ross Perot spent \$20 million just to appear on the ballot in all 50 states in the presidential election of 1992.

### ***3.2.1.2 Limited Third Party Finance***

Basically, American third parties are forced to operate with fewer resources than two major parties. Naturally, running of a successful political campaign is undoubtedly very expensive, especially in America.

First of all, money for third parties from public funds is restricted by Federal Election Campaign Act (FECA). According to FECA, third parties are eligible to receive support from public funds only after the election and only in the case they appear on the ballot in at least ten states and obtain at least five percent of the popular vote, while the Democrats and the Republicans receive money from public funds always and before the election. Moreover, third party candidates would have to obtain more than 15 percent of popular vote to receive as much money as the major parties.<sup>59</sup> FECA limits financial inflow of third parties also by reducing of individual contributions during elections. The campaign finance system obviously discriminates against third parties and protects incumbent parties.<sup>60</sup>

Consequently, third parties are more dependent on the fund raising activities. Afterwards they have to spend part of their hardly raised money on overcoming of ballot access restrictions. Both of these activities are wearing and time consuming.<sup>61</sup> In spite of many possible sponsors, raised money is not usually enough to run a noticeable campaign in

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<sup>57</sup> Behr et al., *Third Parties in America*: 19-23.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 19-23.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 25-26.

<sup>60</sup> Terry Smith, "Parties and Transformative Politics." *Columbia Law Review*, Vol. 100, No.3, Symposium: Law and Political Parties (Apr., 2000), 865. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1123504> (accessed: August 25, 2010).

<sup>61</sup> Behr et al., *Third Parties in America*: 27.



all 50 states. Therefore third parties have to rely more on their own, habitually very modest, sources.

As a result of the financial struggle, third parties cannot afford to hire election professionals, rent technical expertise and push their ideas through the media. Staff is underpaid and more enthusiastic than experienced.<sup>62</sup>

### ***3.2.1.3 Media Coverage of Unknown Candidates***

Limited finance of third parties leads to the fact that third parties and independent candidates can prepare less quality campaign and buy considerably less advertising time than the Democrats or the Republicans. In addition, media often undermine their effort even more. Third party candidates must achieve support of 15 percent or more in one of the national polls to be included in television debates which play pivotal role in influence of public opinion.

American presidential election is issue of the candidates more than the political parties. Candidates of third parties are ordinarily unknown, politically inexperienced and thus they lack credibility. Newspapers and broadcasting companies pay only little attention to them. Furthermore, media, unintentionally or sometimes even intentionally, rather nourish prevailing opinion of third parties as certain political losers.<sup>63</sup>

### ***3.2.1.4 General Attitude towards Third Parties***

American third parties and independent candidates have to fight against one more obstacle – prejudice. Generally, they play the role of underdogs of American politics more than hundred years. Almost nobody expects third party candidates even to have a chance of winning the presidency. Nobody trusts them. It is difficult to raise the money and attract the voters.<sup>64</sup>

In the beginning of their campaigns third parties are accepted by voters and media as a fresh and interesting alternative compared to the two stiff American political parties. However, the closer to the Election Day the more public support drops. Many voters who at first contemplated voting for a third party candidate eventually decide for one of the two lesser evils and cast their vote for one of the major parties to avoid the wasting their vote.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 33-39.

Support for third parties candidates also goes down when the competition between the Democrats and the Republicans is very tight and every vote could decide the outcome of the election.<sup>65</sup>

Unfortunately for third parties, many Americans regards the two-party system as something truly American. Therefore, third parties are perceived to be alien in this system. In addition to adherence of the Americans society to its political system, most Americans claim allegiance to one of the two major parties.<sup>66</sup> One usually inherits partisanship from his or her parents and shift to the different party is abnormally rare.<sup>67</sup>

American society is quite politically conservative and voting for a third party candidate takes surely courage. Voters of third parties are usually voted by young people who votes for their first time or immigrants coming especially from countries with multiparty politics.<sup>68</sup>

### 3.2.2 General Characteristics of the Third Parties in America

American political system of the 20th century obviously provides very hostile environment for third parties and their candidates. All the restrictions and peculiarities of the American system undoubtedly influence the structure and strategy of third parties.

In general, third parties are more influential on the state and local level than on the national level. One of the reasons can be difficulties of the third parties to get on the larger number of ballots. It is easier to overcome local restrictions. Second reason, and probably more significant, is the strategy of third parties. Unlike other third parties in the two-party systems around the world, American third parties are not connected to particular social class or group of people. They are primarily issue centered.<sup>69</sup> They grow, fight and die around single, mostly local, cause.<sup>70</sup> In the case that particular issue of a third party captures significant number of votes, one of the major parties stretch out and integrates the particular

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

<sup>65</sup> Shaun Bowler and David J. Lanoue, "Strategic and protest Voting for Third Parties: The Case of the Canadian NDP," *The Western Political Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No.2 (Jun., 1992), 485-486, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/448722> (accessed August 25, 2010).

<sup>66</sup> Behr et al., *Third Parties in America*: 40-41.

<sup>67</sup> James L. Sundquist, "Whither the American Party System?" *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 88, No. 4 (Dec., 1973), 559-581. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2148162> (accessed September 14, 2009).

<sup>68</sup> Behr et al., *Third Parties in America*: 40-41.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>70</sup> Exception would be left oriented movements such as Socialists, Progressives and Communists. They do have extreme stands and relatively long tradition in the US.

issue into its platform. Voters then do not have a reason for voting a third party anymore. Therefore third party does not have usually anything else to offer and pass away.<sup>71</sup>

Another reason of decline of third parties is candidate-centered politics in the 20th century. Contrary to the 19th century, parties are nowadays about few publicly known and popular figures.<sup>72</sup> Even the Democrats and the Republicans choose in primaries the candidates who have the biggest chance of winning the presidency.<sup>73</sup> Nonetheless, third parties are usually built around and led by only one notable politician and when this person leaves the party or loses credibility, third party perishes again. The Democrats and the Republicans have the relatively bigger capacity to change their leaders.

American third parties live very short life. They operate mostly one or two election turns. This time is not enough to lay strong foundations and gather loyal voters because the party regularly does not participate in the government and cannot reward its voters.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Steve B. Lem and Conor M. Dowling, "Picking Their Spots: Minor Party Candidates in Gubernatorial Elections," *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No.3 (Sep., 2006), 478. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4148047> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>72</sup> Morris P. Fiorina, "Parties and Partisanship: A 40-Year Retrospective." *Political Behavior*, Vol. 24, No.2 Special Issue: Parties and Partisanship, Part One (Jun., 2002), 96. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1558351> (accessed August 25, 2010).

<sup>73</sup> Aaron Wildavsky, "The Goldwater Phenomenon: Purists, Politicians and the Two-Party System," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Jul., 1965), 386. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1405566> (accessed September 14, 2009).

<sup>74</sup> John F. Bibby and L. Sandy Maisel. *Two Parties – Or More?: The American Party System*. (Oxford: Westview Press, 1998): 6-17.

## 4 THIRD PARTIES INFLUENCE

In spite of Democratic and Republican hegemony in the United States, third parties now and then indirectly influence American politics. There are basically two ways third parties do it.

Firstly, third parties by their focus on the single issue often point out the problem neglected by the major parties. One of the two major parties, which is in the terms of the program closer, incorporates the particular issue to its platforms and capture voters of the third party.<sup>75</sup> On the one hand, third party does not have reason to exist. On the other hand, third party pushed their cause to the mainstream politics and thus indirectly succeeded.

Secondly, third party candidate can be so powerful and influential that he or she breaks the institutional barriers and get on the sufficient number of the ballots. In the presidential election this candidate receives a significant share of the popular vote. Even when the candidate does not win the presidency he or she influences the outcome of the whole presidential election by taking crucial votes from the Democrats or the Republicans.

Third parties directly control local policy if they win the particular office. But they also indirectly, whether intentionally or not, influence the American national politics. Capacity to influence the internal political situation of the superpower means the capacity to influence politics in the world.

### 4.1 Theodore Roosevelt and Bull Moose Progressive Party in 1912

In the presidential election of 1912, incumbent Republican president William Howard Taft seeking the reelection was challenged by Democratic candidate Woodrow Wilson. Wilson was not considered as a serious threat to Taft until the Bull Moose Progressive Party entered the competition and shuffled the political cards. Performance of the Bull Moose Party represents the greatest show of the American third party in history. This election shifted the American partisan politics and changed the course of the rising American superpower. Above all, outcome of this presidential election, as it later turned out, had a worldwide impact.

Bull Moose Progressive Party grew around former president Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt was already the American president from 1901 to 1909. During his two terms as

the president, Roosevelt earned reputation of skillful politician who enormously helped America in her transformation from isolated country to the international power.<sup>76</sup> In domestic politics Roosevelt followed progressive ideas and was viewed by ordinary people as their protector against the greed of the corporate barons.<sup>77</sup>

In 1909, Roosevelt found his successor in a person of William Howard Taft. Taft was expected to follow the same Progressives politics like Roosevelt. However, the new president soon proved Roosevelt's expectation to be wrong. Taft represented conservative wing of the Republican Party that called for higher tariffs and other regulations which went against Roosevelt conviction. Taft Administration broke promises given to Roosevelt. Animosity between Conservative and Progressive fractions within the Republican Party intensified. Republican political fray marked also the congressional election of 1910. The Democrats outnumbered the Republicans in the House of Representatives again after 16 years. However, both Republican wings remained together until late 1911 when Taft decided to prosecute U.S. Steel under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. It was the exact opposite of Roosevelt's effort in 1907. That was the last straw.<sup>78</sup>

Leader of the Republican Party for the upcoming presidential election in 1912 was decided in series of fierce primaries and national conventions. Theodore Roosevelt, surprisingly for the party, crushed Taft in the states where voters did the choosing in primaries. However, party delegates and bosses in the rest of the states decided for the incumbent president Taft. Defeated and disappointed Roosevelt denounced the Republicans as thieves and left the party.<sup>79</sup>

Theodore Roosevelt immediately announced his decision to form a new National Progressive Party, better known as the Bull Moose Party,<sup>80</sup> and run for the presidency.

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<sup>75</sup> John C. Berg, "Review: Ready for the Majors? Minor Parties in America Today." *Polity*, Vol. 31, No.3 (Spring, 1999), 525. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3235252> (accessed September 14, 2009).

<sup>76</sup> New American interventionist policy was called Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine. Roosevelt Corollary meant expanding and protection of the American interests in the area of the Caribbean Sea, Central America and Northern part of Latin America. Roosevelt Administration carried out annexation of Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Philippines and Guam. Construction of Panama Canal was taken over from French and successfully finished.

<sup>77</sup> Behr et al., *Third Parties in America*: 82.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 82-84.

<sup>79</sup> Patricia O'Tolle, "The War of 1912." *Time International (South Pacific Edition)*, No.26 (July 3, 2006), 46-49. Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>80</sup> Nickname "Bull Moose" party came from one event when somebody in the crowd asked Roosevelt how he felt. Roosevelt yelled back "Like a Bull Moose".

Theodore Roosevelt did not have to struggle on finances because of his reputation and connections. His candidacy was backed by newspaper magnate Frank Munsey and U.S. Steel director George Perkins. This fact might also help to a rocket start of the party. In several weeks Bull Moose Party had its local organizations almost in every state. Roosevelt gathered his supporters by the platform based on calling for direct elections of senators, direct primaries, women's suffrage, publication of campaign expenditures, regulation of interstate industry, a minimum wage and unemployment insurance.<sup>81</sup>

Presidential competition itself was odd. The Republican Party split. Conservative wing went with Taft who did not have chances of winning from the very beginning. Progressive wing of the Republicans went with Roosevelt, but just part of it. On the other side, the Democrats nominated the New Jersey governor Woodrow Wilson. Progressive voters were attracted by the Democratic platform as well. Ideological difference between Roosevelt and Wilson was not great, except that Roosevelt advocated strong federal government and Wilson fought more for state's rights. Nonetheless, Wilson won the votes of the Progressive voters by advocating radical solutions of acute economic issues, while Roosevelt warned before hasty changes.<sup>82</sup> In addition, considerable number of Roosevelt supporters was unsure about voting a third party and they eventually cast their vote for Wilson.<sup>83</sup>

On the Election Day, November 5, voters decided about the American future. Woodrow Wilson became an American president with plurality of 42 percent, Roosevelt placed second when he polled 27 percent and Taft 23 percent.<sup>84</sup> Wilson as Democratic candidate was more ideologically Progressive than the Progressive Party itself and he was also able to capture many votes of Afro-Americans who traditionally voted for Republicans.<sup>85</sup> However, it is generally believed that Democratic candidate would not have a chance without the split in the Republican Party. The period from 1890s to 1920s was clearly dominated by Republicans. Evidence is three Republican presidents before and three Republican presidents after Woodrow Wilson. The Republican domination ended with the Great Depression and subsequent election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

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<sup>81</sup> Behr et al., *Third Parties in America*: 85-86.

<sup>82</sup> O'Tolle, "The War of 1912." 46-49.

<sup>83</sup> Behr et al., *Third Parties in America*: 86-87.

<sup>84</sup> O'Tolle, "The War of 1912." 46-49.

Participation of the Bull Moose Progressive Party in the presidential election brought to America couple of changes. First, Woodrow Wilson was elected. This remarkable man led the USA through World War I, advocated the foundation of League of Nations and immensely influenced post-war Europe. Furthermore, Wilson drawn a plan for the next Democrat in the White House, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and changed the role of the president to the position of the ultimate leader in time of war or international crisis. American presidency became during his Administration global institution.<sup>86</sup> Wilson is regarded as one of the most influential personages of the 20th century.<sup>87</sup> Second, the platform of the Bull Moose Progressive Party was based on social securities. These ideals resonate in American political life for decades. They undoubtedly influenced FDR's New Deal and domestic policy of Ronald Reagan in 1980s.<sup>88</sup> Even Wilson during his presidency incorporated some ideas from the Progressive platform.<sup>89</sup>

Roosevelt energetically run his campaign and even survived assassination attempt but he failed to recapture the presidency and his new party withered later on. Even though the Bull Moose Party gained few local offices, party was not able to provide enough rewards to its supporters. In addition, Frank Munsey left the party as one of the two biggest sponsors and when in 1914 midterm election Wilson Administration showed a certain loss of support, it was the Republican Party rather than Progressives who benefited.<sup>90</sup> Eventually, the Bull Moose Progressive Party disbanded and Theodore Roosevelt returned to the Republican Party. In the presidential election of 1916 endorsed its nominee, New York governor Charles Evans Hughes, but Woodrow Wilson defended his presidency anyway.<sup>91</sup>

Bull Moose Progressive Party was more a political vehicle for Theodore Roosevelt to reach his personal goals than a regular party. It was a faction of the Republican Party which set out for own single campaign. After Bull Moose Party failed to bring the presidency to

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<sup>85</sup> Kathleen Long Wolgemuth, "Woodrow Wilson's Appointment Policy and the Negroes." *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 24, No.4 (Nov. 1958) 457. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2954673> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>86</sup> Edward S. Corwin, "Woodrow Wilson and the Presidency." *Virginia Law Review*, Vol. 42, No. 6 (Oct. 1956), 777-782. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1070269> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>87</sup> Henry A. Turner, "Woodrow Wilson and Public Opinion." *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No.4 (Winter, 1957-1958), 505. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2746762> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>88</sup> O'Tolle, "The War of 1912." 46-49.

<sup>89</sup> Behr et al., *Third Parties in America*: 87.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 86-87.

<sup>91</sup> Bibby and Maisel. *Two Parties - Or More? : The American Party System*: 33.

Theodore Roosevelt, it had only a little to offer. It was party of one man, not of ideas.<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, Bull Moose Progressive Party recorded highest plurality from all American third parties in history and its impact on the American society was enormous and long-running.

#### **4.2 Truman's Strategy against H. Wallace and S. Thurmond in 1948**

In 1948, Democratic president Henry S. Truman had to cope with two third party threats. Paradoxically, Henry A. Wallace as well as Strom Thurmond were both originally Democrats. However, they left the party because of the issues they believed in and fought on their own. And even when they eventually reached no more than 2.5 percent of the popular vote each, they significantly influenced Truman's policy.<sup>93</sup>

First of them, Henry Agard Wallace, was for many years the Democratic Secretary of Agriculture and later the handpicked Vice-president under Franklin Delano Roosevelt. However, the conservative wing in the Democratic Party kept Wallace out of the ticket for the presidential election in 1944 and chose instead Missouri senator Henry Truman. Wallace's views of foreign policy were a thorn in conservative side. Henry Wallace disagreed with Truman hard line towards the Soviet Union. Even though Wallace was offered a consolation prize and became the Secretary of Commerce he was eventually asked by Truman to resign in 1946.<sup>94</sup>

Out of the office, Henry Wallace continued in criticism of President Truman. Wallace wanted to show Truman's wrong doing and therefore he decided in December to run for the presidency under the label of the Progressive Party. In February, Wallace already reached 11.5 percent of the popular vote in the public polls. Truman did not hesitate and attacked. In response to Wallace's liberal and progressive platform, Truman proposed a 50 percent increase in social security benefits as well as national health insurance, slum clearance, low rent housing, federal aid to education, increases in the minimum wage and in unemployment compensation. These all were originally planks in Wallace's platform. In effort to keep black voters, Truman proposed several measures which among others included federal protection against lynching and affirmation of the right to vote for blacks. As a result, support for

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<sup>92</sup> Behr et al., *Third Parties in America*: 87-88.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 103-110.



Henry Wallace declined steadily. In the end, less than 1.2 million voters cast their votes for Wallace in November election. It meant 2.4 percent of the popular vote. Henry Wallace did not candidate again.<sup>95</sup>

Second man against Truman, Governor Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, came up from the Southern Democrats who opposed Truman's civil rights program. Although not many Southern leaders were willing to join this faction and jeopardize their political careers, new political movement States' Rights Democrat grew strong. President Truman did not stay indifferent even to this threat. As support for Henry Wallace waned, administration was gradually downplaying civil rights in the campaign. Truman devoted only one speech in Harlem to this issue, whereas he talked about economy in the South. Eventually, Thurmond received 2.4 percent of the popular vote, same as Wallace. However, he gained 22.6 percent in the states of former Confederacy and even won in four of them. He captured the 38 electoral votes.<sup>96</sup>

Truman's response to presidential candidacies of Henry Wallace and Strom Thurmond represents apt example of the strategy of the two major parties and how they deal with the threat of third parties. One campaign was originally raised because of foreign policy and second because of the civil rights. Truman skillfully adapted Democratic platform and campaign for the 1948 presidential election to secure his victory.

### 4.3 George Wallace's Crusade in 1968

George Wallace was Democratic Governor of Alabama. He became widely known in June 1963 when he blocked the doorway to the University of Alabama and not allowed to enter to two black students. This symbolic gesture was very strong and made Wallace a celebrity. This was George Wallace's form of protest against federally mandated integration.<sup>97</sup>

In 1968, George Wallace was already out of his office because Alabama laws do not allow to Governor serve more than two terms. However, George Wallace had strong

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<sup>94</sup> Richard Polenber, "Review: Henry A. Wallace and American Liberalism." *Reviews in American History*, Vol. 1, No.4 (Dec., 1973), 579-583. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2701727> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>95</sup> Behr et al., *Third Parties in America*: 103-107.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 107-110.

<sup>97</sup> Dan T. Carter, "Legacy of Rage: George Wallace and Transformation of American Politics." *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Feb., 1998), 3-26. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2211204> (accessed April 15, 2011).

support and he knew it. Therefore he decided to launch his presidential campaign. Soon, the American Independent Party grew around him.<sup>98</sup>

Wallace called for law and order, states' rights, protecting property rights and fought against an out-of-touch federal government. Nevertheless, everybody subconsciously knew what he is talking about. Racism was a core of his campaign. Wallace attracted not only avowed racists but also those who felt threatened by emergence of blacks in the society. His support was growing. In February, he reached 11 percent and during summer it was almost 20 percent of the popular vote in the public polls.<sup>99</sup>

Two major party presidential candidates were aware of Wallace's growing support and they took action. Trying to attract potential Wallace voters, Republican presidential nominee Richard Nixon softened his stand on racial integration. He started to advocate an end of the policy of cutting off federal funds from segregated schools. Moreover, Nixon did extra campaign in the South where Wallace had his stronghold. This campaign was supported also by Thurmond who was now a Republican. On the other side, Democratic nominee Hubert Humphrey was clamant civil rights advocate and thus his position for maneuvering was very limited. However, Humphrey at least stressed labor in effort to keep blue-collar workers with the Democrats.<sup>100</sup>

In November, the Election Day revealed that Nixon concocted the best strategy for 1968 election and comfortably won. Support for Wallace peaked in September when 23 percent of voters claimed they will cast their vote just for Wallace. However, Wallace eventually obtained less than 10 million votes and it meant 13.5 percent of the popular vote. In the former Confederacy it was 34.3 percent and he triumphed in five southern states.<sup>101</sup>

George Wallace had enormous impact on American politics in spite of his defeat. Wallace mobilized disaffected and powerless whites who felt that two major parties abandoned them. He was the first politician who truly recognized and exploited changes in the American society which became known as white backlash, the silent majority or the alienated voters.<sup>102</sup> In addition, George Wallace, in effort to ensure his spot on the ballots in all fifty states, engaged in several successful court battles against ballot access restrictions.

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<sup>98</sup> Behr et al., *Third Parties in America*: 110-115.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

These regulations became less burdensome after Wallace campaign in 1968 and it helped Wallace's successors in their third party wrestle.<sup>103</sup>

Since Wallace's presidential candidacy, Richard Nixon clearly moved more to the right and during his presidency remain moderate in his views of the civil rights. Furthermore, Nixon kept an eye on the Southern states with his "Southern strategy". George Wallace became a catalyst in the regional partisan shift. More than century southern whites were predominately voters of the Democratic Party. However, they tend to be Republicans nowadays.<sup>104</sup>

#### 4.4 Ross Perot Running for the Presidency in 1992

The presidential election of 1992 was the biggest display of the third party candidate since the election of 1912 when Roosevelt's candidacy caused schism in the Republican ranks and thus helped to the Democratic nominee Woodrow Wilson to become the president. This time party was crashed by Ross Perot, billionaire from Texas.

H. Ross Perot, unlike Theodore Roosevelt, was a nonpartisan. He was a businessman, not a politician. Perot ran as an independent and was against the idea that politics is a profession. His candidacy was supported by his movement United We Stand America. Campaign was predominately financed by Perot's extensive wealth. Chasing the presidency, Perot spent more than \$69 million. This was a comparable budget to Clinton or Bush.<sup>105</sup>

Perot surprisingly appeared in the political competition between incumbent Republican president George Bush and young Democratic nominee Bill Clinton, governor of Arkansas. Rather than his persona, Ross Perot attracted voters by the issues he raised and his pragmatic "can-do" attitude. Main issue of the 1992 election was undoubtedly the economy. Perot called for prompt reduction of the federal budget deficit even at the cost of imposition of new taxes. Ross Perot promised to "get under the hood" and fix the American economy. Furthermore, he intended to limit terms of public officials, especially those in Congress. Idea was the limiting senator's and representatives' terms to two or three terms. Perot and

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<sup>102</sup> Carter, "Legacy of Rage: George Wallace and Transformation of American Politics." 3-26.

<sup>103</sup> Howard J. Gold, "Third Party Voting in Presidential Elections: A Study of Perot, Anderson, and Wallace." *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 48. No. 4 (Dec., 1995), 751-773. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/448973> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>104</sup> Carter, "Legacy of Rage: George Wallace and Transformation of American Politics." 3-26.

<sup>105</sup> Gold, "Third Party Voting in Presidential Elections: A Study of Perot, Anderson, and Wallace." 751-773.

his platform were more liberal than Bush but more conservative than Clinton at the same time. Ross Perot captured the position of the aggressive centrist.<sup>106</sup>

Ross Perot's campaign hit the bull's eye. Bush's term was one of the worst economic periods in the last couple of years. For example, disposable per capita income grew only 1 percent during Bush's term. In contrast to the growth of 8.5 and 6.6 percent during preceding two Reagan's terms and 7.3 percent during Carter's term.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, both incumbent president George Bush and his Democratic counterpart Bill Clinton did not enjoyed very favorable ratings. Many citizens considered Bush out of touch with average Americans. Clinton, according to polls, was untrustworthy. Ross Perot as the nonpartisan with his problem-solving approach most likely gained a lot from the environment of disaffection with the system and strong anti-partisan sentiment.<sup>108</sup>

Hordes of dissatisfied and disappointed voters were pulled to Perot and his movement. Independents and weak partisans such as first-time voters and young people under age of thirty were naturally more susceptible to Perot's third party appeal. Since economy was the key issue of the election and Perot addressed economic adversaries more than other two major candidates, many voters who cared about budget deficit or about economy in general cast their vote for just for Perot.<sup>109</sup>

Perot substantially invested into media. He also frequently appeared on the popular Larry King show. In this show Perot asked for a help with the campaign, especially to distribute petitions in order to get on the ballots. Shortly afterwards, thousands of volunteers joined Perot.<sup>110</sup> His campaign gained momentum. In the heights of his popularity in June 1992, Ross Perot ran even ahead of both major parties candidates in several public polls. This enabled to Perot to appear in television debates with both major candidates. Ross

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<sup>106</sup> Michael R. Alvarez, and Jonathan Nagler, "Economics, Issues and the Perot Candidacy: Voter Choice in the 1992 Presidential Election." *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Aug., 1995), 720. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111651> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 715.

<sup>108</sup> Gold, "Third Party Voting in Presidential Elections: A Study of Perot, Anderson, and Wallace." 751-773.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> James A. McCann, Ronald B. Rapoport, and Walter. J. Stone, "Heeding the Call: An Assessment of Mobilization into H. Ross Perot's 1992 Presidential Campaign." *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 43, No.1 (Jan., 1999), 1-28. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2991783> (accessed April 15, 2011).

Perot kept his support high even though he dropped out of his campaign on July 16, and re-entered the race on October 1.<sup>111</sup>

Election Day finally brought denouement. Ross Perot obtained over 19 million votes that meant 18.9 percent of the popular vote. Bush got 37.4 percent and Clinton won the election with 43.0 percent. Consequently, Bill Clinton became the fascinating American president in the time of favorable social and economic conditions. Clinton represents complex persona but also easily stereotyped by humorist and his opponents.<sup>112</sup>

Nearly one vote in five was cast for the Perot. Perot was the most successful third party presidential candidate in the last 80 years. However, Ross Perot finished second in several states and thus he received no electoral votes. He did not win any state because his support was more nationwide compared to George Wallace's candidacy. In 1968, Wallace obtained "only" 13.6 percent of the popular vote but he won in five southern states and therefore carried 43 electoral votes.

Nonetheless, question is where would the crowd of 19 million voters go if Ross Perot did not run? Did Perot candidacy change the outcome of the 1992 presidential election? On the one hand, Democrats introduced the moderate economy platform.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, based on economy issues Perot took more votes from Bush than Clinton.<sup>114</sup> Perot also captured more voters who voted for George Bush than Democrat nominee Michael Dukakis in 1988 presidential election.<sup>115</sup> On the other hand, in the case of Perot absence in the election Perot voters would split almost equally between the two major party candidates. Clinton would obtain 55.5 percent and Bush 44.5 percent of the Perot share. Perot presence just inflated Clinton margin over Bush. Perot simply appealed to many Republican voters because of his conservative economic policies and to many Democrats because of his liberal social views

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<sup>111</sup> Steven J. Brams, and Samuel Merrill III, "Would Ross Perot Have Won the 1992 Presidential Election under Approval Voting?" *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Mar., 1994), 39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/420456> (accessed 15, 2011).

<sup>112</sup> Stephen J. Wayne, "Clinton's Legacy: The Clinton Persona." *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (Sep., 1999), 558-561. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/420645> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>113</sup> Alvarez and Nagler, "Economics, Issues and the Perot Candidacy: Voter Choice in the 1992 Presidential Election." 715.

<sup>114</sup> Kathryn M. Doherty, and James G. Gimpel, "Candidate Character vs. the Economy in the 1992 Election." *Political Behavior*, Vol. 19, No.3 (Sep., 1997), 190-191. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/586515> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>115</sup> Alvarez and Nagler, "Economics, Issues and the Perot Candidacy: Voter Choice in the 1992 Presidential Election." 719-720.

on issues such as abortion.<sup>116</sup> Additionally, few mathematical models argue the contrary theory – Perot took more voters from Clinton than Bush.<sup>117</sup>

Despite the provable fact that Perot candidacy did not affect the outcome of 1992 presidential election, Perot's movement considerably influenced the upcoming American partisan politics. In 1992, Perot characterized the federal budget deficit as being comparable to "a crazy old aunt in the attic" which none of the major parties cared to discuss. By the end of the decade the Republicans as well as the Democrats had endorsed the plans to reduce federal budget deficit. It was Perot's candidacy which brought this issue to the light of mainstream politics.<sup>118</sup>

Another plank of the Perot's platform was the idea to limit terms of public officials. This proposal surely brought hordes of supporters to Perot. And this issue together with Perot economics ideas appeared two years later in the Republican "Contract with America" composed by Newt Gingrich to support 1994 midterm election. The contract emphasized issues from Perot's platform but it also omitted reference to Republican priorities such as promoting free trade and stopping abortion which were strongly opposed by supporters of Ross Perot during presidential election of 1992. It was clear appeal to the Perot voters from 1992 and about two thirds of original Perot supporters heard Republican wooing. Newt Gingrich "Contract with America" gained to Republicans a majority in the both Houses of Congress for the first time in 40 years.<sup>119</sup>

Republican strategy continued also in the following years. In exceptionally narrow 2000 presidential election, George W. Bush succeeded in the states that were Perot's strongholds in 1992.<sup>120</sup>

Ross Perot ran in the presidential election once more. In 1996, Ross Perot followed the public polls calling for a third party and founded the Reform Party to back his second candidacy. This time Perot's investment into campaign was substantially more modest than

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<sup>116</sup> Brams and Merrill III, "Would Ross Perot Have Won the 1992 Presidential Election under Approval Voting?" 39.

<sup>117</sup> Dean Lacy, and Barry C. Burden, "The Vote-Stealing and Turnout Effects of Ross Perot in the 1992 U.S. Presidential Election." *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (Jan., 1999), 234-252. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2991792> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>118</sup> Walter J. Stone, and Ronald B. Rapoport, "It's Perot Stupid! The Legacy of the 1992 Perot Movement in the Major-Party System, 1992-2000." *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 52-56. <http://journals.cambridge.org> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

4 years ago. Seemingly, Ross Perot lost his spark and was no longer fresh alternative. Perot obtained only 8.4 percent of the popular vote.<sup>121</sup> However, no third party or its candidate before Perot received more than 5 percent of the popular vote in consecutive elections.<sup>122</sup>

In the next presidential election of 2000, Ross Perot did not run and endorsed Republican and also Texan George W. Bush.<sup>123</sup>

#### 4.5 Close Presidential Election in 2000

In 2000, Democrat Albert Gore and Republican George W. Bush contested for the presidency. Election Day was on 7 November but it took additional thirty-six days and several court decisions before the new American president was known. This election happened to be the most controversial presidential election in the American history.<sup>124</sup>

According to the official counts, Gore won 50,999,897 votes (48.4 percent), Bush won 50,456,002 (47.9 percent) votes and rest went to other candidates. Nonetheless, George W. Bush became the 43rd American president because he won more states than Al Gore.<sup>125</sup> Gore obtained 266 electoral votes whereas Bush got 271 electoral votes. This was one of the closest election results in American history.<sup>126</sup> Although Gore won the national popular vote by over 500,000 votes, he lost important state of Florida with 25 electoral votes by 537 votes.<sup>127</sup>

One of the crucial aspects of the election was candidacy of Ralph Nader, presidential nominee of the Green Party. Nader obtained only 2.74 percent of the popular vote. Nevertheless, this number most likely played the critical role in this close election.

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<sup>121</sup> Martin Walker, "The US Presidential Election, 1996." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, Vol. 72, No. 4, The Americas: European Security (Oct., 1996), 657-674. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2624114> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>122</sup> McCann et al., "Heeding the Call: An Assessment of Mobilization into H. Ross Perot's 1992 Presidential Campaign." 1-28.

<sup>123</sup> CNN.com, "Ross Perot Endorses George W. Bush for President," CNN Transcripts, Larry King Live, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0011/02/lkl.00.html> (accessed May 3, 2011).

<sup>124</sup> Sheila Jasanoff, "Election 2000: Mechanical Error or System Failure?" *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Jun., 2001), 461-467. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3183019> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Stone and Rapoport, "It's Perot Stupid! The Legacy of the 1992 Perot Movement in the Major-Party System, 1992-2000." 49-50.

<sup>127</sup> Alan Agresti, and Bret Presnell, "Misvotes, Undervotes and Overvotes: The 2000 Presidential Election in Florida." *Statistical Science*, Vol. 17, No.4, Voting and Elections (Nov., 2002), 436-440. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3182765> (accessed April 15, 2011).

It is widely believed that Nader's votes would go to Gore.<sup>128</sup> If Ralph Nader had not been on the ballot, Gore would easily carried Florida and other states with narrow results, such as Tennessee and New Hampshire. Consequently, Al Gore would be the next president, not George W. Bush<sup>129</sup>

After the election, Ralph Nader was accused to be a "spoiler". Looking at it from different angle, Nader and his candidacy in 2000 had an irreplaceable contribution for America. His progressive platform showed importance of many neglected issues such as bioengineered food, campaign finance reform, capital punishment, civil liberties, corporate crime, globalization, health care, housing, the Middle East, nuclear disarmament, Pentagon spending, poverty, the war in Colombia, the war on drugs and others.<sup>130</sup>

Ralph Nader found his voters especially among young white men, non-churchgoers, white liberal Independents and former Perot voters.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Robert S. Erikson, "The 2000 Presidential Election in Historical Perspective." *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 116, No.1 (Spring, 2001), 37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2657819> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>129</sup> Gerald M. Pomper, "The 2000 Presidential Election: Why Gore Lost." *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 116, No. 2 (Summer, 2001), 201-223. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/798059> (accessed April 15, 2011).

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.



## 5 FUTURE CHALLENGERS OF THE MAJOR PARTIES

The two-party system is entrenched in the American society. It is widely accepted among Americans or sometimes even perceived as sacrosanct.<sup>132</sup> However, two major players in this system do not enjoy such popularity. Since the late 1960s and early 1970s dissatisfaction with Democrats and Republicans is growing and there has been discussion that two major parties are in decay.<sup>133</sup> Several third party and independent candidates already affected the system and the two major parties in several different ways. Who can be the next challenger of the status quo?

### 5.1 Tea Party Movement

Tea Party movement appeared within the Republican Party in 2009. This movement is named after the famous Boston Tea Party in 1773. Generally, Tea Partiers hold more conservative views than the Republicans. While the Republicans tend to describe themselves as “dissatisfied” with current Obama Administration, Tea Party supporters are more likely to say that they are “angry.”<sup>134</sup> They stand for a very conservative interpretation of the Constitution and call for a stronger military, family values, a balanced budget, ending of deficit spending, reducing of taxes and a downsized government. The movement also carries strong signs of nativism and its supporters claim that gun ownership is sacred.<sup>135</sup>

Tea Party movement represents a long-time clash between the moderate and conservative wing of the Republican Party. In 2008, the Republican presidential candidate John McCain chose Sarah Palin, Governor of Alaska at that time, to be his running mate and the Vice-president candidate. This was a clear attempt of moderate McCain to appease the

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<sup>132</sup> Hugh P. Williamson, “The Two-Party System, Its Foibles and Follies.” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (Jan., 1964), 85-93. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3484582> (accessed September 14, 2009).

<sup>133</sup> Christian Collet, “Trends: Third Parties and the Two-Party System.” *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 60, No. 3 (Autumn, 1996), 431-449. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2749746> (accessed September 14, 2009).

<sup>134</sup> Kate Zerkine, and Megan Thee-Brenan, “Poll Finds Tea Party Backers Wealthier and More Educated.” *New York Times*, [online] (April 14, 2010). [http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/15/us/politics/15poll.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/15/us/politics/15poll.html?_r=1) (accessed April 28, 2011).

<sup>135</sup> Teaparty.org, “What is the Tea Party?” <http://www.teaparty.org/about.php> (accessed April 25, 2011).

conservative Republicans with prominent Sarah Palin,<sup>136</sup> current active member of the Tea Party.

Although the Tea Party movement has no headquarter to visit, no chairman, no written official platform and no chosen candidates, it quickly gains adherent in the whole America, using modern tools such as Facebook, YouTube and blogs.<sup>137</sup>

Supporters of the Tea Party are predominantly the Republicans and they do not want the third party. They would rather include Tea Party priorities into the Republican platform.<sup>138</sup> Will the Tea Party push the Republicans more to the right? Are Tea Partiers going to challenge the Republicans in the primaries for the 2012 presidential election? Or is there possible schism of the Republican Party similar to 1912 election and Roosevelt' candidacy? Upcoming months or years will tell us the truth.

## 5.2 Ralph Nader's Candidacy

Ralph Nader stands on the other side. He can be the possible threat to the Democratic Party. Political veteran Ralph Nader ran already five times for the presidency and his sixth run is just about to start. Nader laid out the argument that Barack Obama will be easily reelected due to confusion in the Republican Party. Ralph Nader is aware that he cannot be a serious challenge for Obama in the Democratic primaries, but he believes that his candidacy can pull Obama's policy in the opposite direction.<sup>139</sup> Will Ralph Nader run in the 2012 presidential election? Can he play the role of the spoiler like he did in 2000? Nothing is sure now.

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<sup>136</sup> Interestingly, public polls proved that a plurality of Tea Party supporters do not think Sarah Palin is qualified to be president.

<sup>137</sup> David Von Drehle, Jay Newton-Small, Sam Jeweler, Kevin O'Leary, Sophia Yan, and Wendy Malloy, "Tea Party America." *Time* 175, No. 8 (2010), 26-31. Business Source Complete, EBSCOhost (accessed April 28, 2011).

<sup>138</sup> Kate Zerkine, and Megan Thee-Brenan. "Poll Finds Tea Party Backers Wealthier and More Educated."

<sup>139</sup> Jennifer Epstein, "Ralph Nader: Pressure Obama with primary." *Politico.com*, [online] (April 27, 2011). <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/0411/53825.html> (accessed April 28, 2011).

## CONCLUSION

The United States has been ideologically ambivalent since its beginning. In a colonial period, one group of the American colonist wanted their country remain a dependency of England, but others dreamt about sovereign and independent nation. After independence had been achieved the new country stood on a crossroad. Should America be a federacy with the strong central government or rather a confederacy with the independent states' governments? Focus more on building of industry or agriculture? Would be more beneficial alliance with England or France? People were divided over these fundamental issues. These contradictions were embodied by politicians Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. Both of these men found very soon thousands of followers. Consequently, two political parties were born and with continuously growing differences between North and South and disagreement whether to preserve the Union or let some states secede, bipartisanship and polarization have become the basic features of the American society.

Natural American bipartisanship was later institutionalized by introducing of the-first-past-the-post election system. According to Duverger's law, this system enables a creation of two major parties. Nowadays, America is more than 150 years governed either by Democrats or Republicans. During this time, two major parties strengthened their duopoly by passing numerous laws and regulations to discourage other political movements.

However, third parties and independent candidates several times challenged and influenced the American politics in several ways. Nevertheless, there are especially two main ways.

First, third party candidates influence indirectly the outcome of the election. These candidates can cause a split in one of the two major parties like Theodore Roosevelt did in 1912. In this case third party can do more harm than help to its cause. Former Republican Theodore Roosevelt was surely more ideologically close to Republican William Howard Taft whose defeat Roosevelt caused. Roosevelt candidacy gave the presidency to the man from the enemy camp, Democrat Woodrow Wilson. Another example of influence on the election would be Ralph Nader's candidacy in 2000. Nader took voters from Democratic nominee Al Gore, because of the some similar planks in their platforms and thus Republican George W. Bush became a president

Second, third parties often rise around issue which two major parties neglected. If the issue becomes important and attracts many potential voters, one of the two major parties,

which is in terms of program closer, integrates particular issue to its platform. Afterwards, third party loses its voters together with the reason of existence. Examples can be found in presidential candidacies of Henry Wallace, Strom Thurmond, George Wallace or Ross Perot.

It is also possible to observe under which conditions third parties thrive and their candidates are more likely to run for the presidency. Primarily, it is when one or both major parties fail to deliver expected results. Especially when the important issue is neglected or major party presidential candidates are weak or untrustworthy. Secondly, there is economic factor. Third parties are more likely to run when economic situation is not favorable and voters are looking for an alternative. Thirdly, third party must have a capable leader and enough of financial resources to play significant role in presidential elections.

Emergence of third party frequently elicits doubts about the stability and benefits of the American two-party system. However, American political system is so flexible and decentralized that it can easily take on board new policies and ideas. This lends the American two-party system a great deal of stability. Change of the American system would require an election laws change and possibly a change in the Constitution. Moreover, two-party system is regarded as something truly American and traditional in America. Seemingly, only chance of third party to change the system would be to replace one of the two major parties. Republicans were the last third party which managed it, but it took a dissolution of Whigs and coalition of several parties and movements.

There should be also a question, if third parties are successful and what they really want. It is hard to say. Before election, Ross Perot predicted that his party would be “the largest party in the country.” On the contrary, other parties are ordinarily less courageous in the public statements and most of their candidates are aware of their desperate prospects. In the term of winning offices, third parties’ campaigns cannot be regarded as success. On the other hand, third parties have great ability to push and politicize their cause. Therefore third parties are one of the forces that shape American politics. Although they are usually forgotten or undermined by media, third parties undoubtedly have enormous impact.

Last question is if third parties should be perceived as “spoilers” or rather as guardians of democracy. Third parties pounce on Democratic and Republican failings and mistakes. Thus third parties keep the two-party system healthy and they ensure that two major parties stay in touch with common people and their wishes, problems and concerns.

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