Defending the Two-Party System (from *Daily Kos*)

**JD Bachman**  - Wednesday August 31, 2016 · 1:41 PM EDT

There aren’t many people who will utter the following words with a smile on their face — “The two-party system is working!” — Unless sarcastic. However, I can find a way to defend this...

History will tell you that the Democrats and Republicans have always maintained control of the two choices we get one November, every four years — but we also know that they weren’t always defined as they are today. If you were a Republican in 1856, you would likely be a Democrat today. If you were a Democrat in 1828, you would likely be a Republican by today’s standards.

History has shown that these parties have adapted and changed ideas, policies and creeds throughout the centuries. However, one concept has remained consistent — and that’s the funneling of all of these ideas into two ideologies.

Why has this happened? Well, it’s the notion of two main ideas:

1. This is a democracy.
2. This prevents extremism.

In fact, the two-party system can be defended by this election year alone, on both sides. This is where democracy shines — Plenty of left-wing Bernie Sanders supporters, like myself, showed up in droves to support the ideas and policies of this progressive candidate. We voted in record numbers, and the result came in eventually creating the most democratic platform in history.

That’s democracy — however, it’s the version that sees not one party take entire control, but the compromise in ideas to complete a better rounded platform. We are seeing the opposite when it comes to the Republican party, as the ideas of the alt-right are actually pushing Republicans away, forcing them to begrudgingly work with Trump on prior reckless policies. (See: the immigration flip-flop)

What would we get if all four current parties were represented equally?

Well for one, we’d have the Green Party, who shares a policy match of approximately 91% with the current Democratic platform. That almost doesn’t make sense, when you think about it — The separating differences are little, and mostly come with inexperienced policy-making and problem solving. (Like how Jill Stein wants to erase student debt with quantitative easing — a solution which would make any economist cringe) In other words, the Green Party is just the Democratic Party, only with less experience and a few extreme leftist ideas.
The Libertarian Party comes off as the Republican party on steroids — let’s just privatize everything! Including schools — and with that, no safety net for the impoverished in society like there is now with government assistance. This, again, is extreme and rather reckless. I would go as far as to say it’s the “other” alt-right wing of the Republican party, with differences only really in foreign policy and civil rights. (Which the latter of those the GOP will soon change to survive in this modern political age)

We all know what Democrats and Republicans have in policies, so I won’t go into detail there.

These four party concepts can be narrowed down to two forms of ideologies — collectivism (democrat/green) and individualism. (republican/libertarian) One calls for more government and more collaboration, the other calls for less government and less collaboration. While there are shades of grey and influences from each concept — each of the four parties will lean one direction or another.

In short — there doesn’t need to be more than two parties. (Collectivist/Democrat — Individualist/Republican)

The system of vote and influence is what needs work. Yes, we need to either do away with the electoral college, or at the least create a process where your vote counts and is distributed equally, even in a losing state. We need to get rid of gerrymandering, and most of all, denounce and abolish citizens united and either equally regulate, or get money out of politics, completely.

Jumping to a three or four party system will not change any of the above — in fact, it could make it worse and much more confusing.

Most issues, when you get down to it, can be narrowed down to two sides. Are you pro-life or pro-choice? Pro-legalization or pro-criminalization? Pro-regulation or pro-deregulation? Pro-war or pro-peace? Do you want to see government spending put into the military, corporate tax breaks, and building walls, or spending put into education, clean energy, and a reduction of the military?

While there are of course shades of grey to all of these issues, they more or less narrow down to a simple “yes or no” answer. In closing, when someone tries to use the rhetoric of how the two-party system is “destroying” America, just remember, it’s actually keeping it together more than one would think — and it’s been as such for nearly 200 years. It’s when we, as a people, collectively change the fairness of the voting and campaigning process, will we see true change.
The Two Party System Is Imperfect, but More Effective


The most viable political parties in two-party systems sustain complex coalitions by offering a program for government that, even if perfect in the eyes of few, is good enough in the eyes of most.

Other electoral systems, like proportional representation, require major parties to form post-election coalitions with smaller parties that champion a cluster of causes or a less popular platform. The result may be a program for government that no one party would have adopted itself. But politics is the art of the possible.

Coalitions are necessary under the American and British systems, too, but the coalitions are worked out before the election where one of the major parties will be successful. The coalitions are internal to the major parties, which accommodate a range of ideas about a program for government.

These coalitions can fracture when an outside party or candidate promotes a position that cannot easily be accommodated within a major party. In the 2015 U.K. election, for example, three smaller parties took positions on independence (for Scotland, for Wales, or for the U.K. from the European Union) that neither the Conservative Party nor the Labour Party would adopt. Both major parties lost votes and all but one of the minor parties failed to impress on Election Day.

A minor party and its voters should ask themselves whether they would be able to promote their program inside of a main party’s coalition. If they can, insisting on splitting the vote of that main party’s supporters is to indulge the art of the impossible in politics. And if they can’t, they might ask whether their cause or program should interest an electorate if it cannot interest one or both of the main contenders for government.