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Confidence in America's government institutions has continually decreased over the past decade. In the year 2020, this growing lack of public confidence in government became apparent as the government failed, in the public's eye, to solve numerous problems over the course of the year. The 2020 election showcased suspicions and fears directed at the American electoral system and the validity of America's constitutional institutions. In recent polling data by the Hill, it was revealed that 33% of United States citizens believed that the Presidential Election in 2020 was unfair (*The Hill* 2021). Within the Republican Party alone, Forbes magazine found that 68% of Republicans believed that the elections were rigged, with 52% outright denying the legitimacy of Joe Biden's victory (*Forbes* 2020). This growing lack of confidence in government institutions in the United States is not just a trend at the national level, nor is it just a trend within the Republican Party. Recent media reports regarding police shootings involving African-Americans have caused the public's confidence in the police to drop to a 22-year low of 52% (Gallup 2015). At the same time, public trust in other institutions has also decreased. For instance, according to a survey done by the Associated Press in October 2020, the government response to COVID-19 has caused the number of Americans who expressed confidence in state or local governments to drop from 63% in April to 26% and has caused only 36% of Americans to have confidence in federal health institutions (Netburn 2020).

What is causing this lack of confidence in government institutions, and how can it be remedied? In popular discourse, many people claim that increasing the number of institutionalized and viable political parties would benefit the American political system (Reinhart 2018). This opinion is supported by researchers who have also suggested that the two-party system is at fault for the increasing distrust that we see directed at government institutions today. They believe that a multi-party system

may be able to promote more public confidence in government institutions (Miller and Ola 1990; Drutman 2019). In this paper, I will analyze this claim to see if different party systems influence public confidence in government institutions and whether or not a multi-party system inspires greater public confidence in government institutions compared to a two-party system.

Public Trust and Confidence within a Democracy

Scholars have reached a broad consensus that democracy relies on trust in order to receive legitimacy from the electorate (Abramson 2017; Newton 2001). A government may find it difficult to make and enforce laws on behalf of its citizens, or enact viable policies that are viewed with legitimacy, without the general public's confidence (Dodsworth and Cheeseman 2020; Marine and Hooghie 2011). Many researchers fear that the institution of representative democracy itself may come under scrutiny in times where there is a deep distrust in government institutions. This has been seen with the recent rise of left-wing and right-wing populist movements, causing a disinterest and distrust in traditional democratic governments.

Despite this fear in the deep distrust of government, there is a role that distrust plays within a democratic government by encouraging critical thinking in regards to actions undertaken by the government. Too little distrust in government institutions can be damaging to the health of democratic institutions. A healthy level of skepticism and critical approaches to government institutions by the public is necessary to prevent corruption and hold the government accountable when it fails to provide for the citizens (Abramson 2017; Dodsworth and Cheeseman 2020). In fact, many political theorists recognize this need for a level of mistrust and believe that "disaggregating power" within a democracy is a vital part of maintaining the correct balance of public trust in the democratic system. The American founding father James Madison said, "If institutions were properly designed to disaggregate power and to check the power of some with the power of others, the worst human ambitions could be curbed without men becoming angels" (Abramson 2017). For those who agree with Madison's statement, the establishment of decentralized and competitive government institutions is critical in maintaining a properly functioning democratic government (Abramson 2017).

There is research that shows that the decentralization of democratic institutions does help increase public confidence in government. A study by Slomczynski and Janicka found that the more competitive and decentralized democratic institutions were within a country, the higher the rates of political trust there were, specifically when talking about confidence in the national legislature, political parties, and the judicial system (Slomczynski and Janicka 2014). Other researchers dispute this idea. In his work on Eastern European nations, Besir Ceka discovered that many Eastern Europeans were highly dissatisfied and mistrustful of their country's democratic institutions (Ceka 2012). Further research by Ceka confirmed that Eastern European nations with highly democratic contested elections ended up being more distrustful

of their political system despite having strong and competitive democratic institutions (Ceka 2012).

It is possible that this discrepancy between the results could be because Eastern European nations have weaker economic systems and a lower quality of life than other democratic nations with higher rates of public confidence (Slomczynski and Janicka 2014). The concept that government satisfaction and confidence are based on the standard of living instead of how democratic the institutions are is not unique. Many other researchers of democratic confidence have studied the effects of economic development and quality of life on the public's perception of democracy. These researchers note that notions of democracy have changed from an original view of judging the health of a nation's democracy based on its ability to establish free and fair elections to an approach focused on how capable modern democracies are at establishing higher standards of living for their citizens (Kim 2007). This research implies that the level of decentralization in a government may not affect public confidence in government at all.

Political Parties as a Democratic Institution

Whether or not confidence in the democratic system and in government institutions is increased by having more competitive elections and decentralized democratic systems will be addressed by our main question on party systems. Because of this, it is important to establish a basis of research on how political parties fit into the democratic system. For the purposes of this paper, the term *political party* will refer to "any group of politically active persons outside a government who organize to capture government by nominating and electing officials who thereby control the operations of government and determine its position" (Dode 2010).

Past literature mentions many ways in which political parties help establish, sustain, and direct a democratic government. Political parties make it easier to hold the government accountable, prevent the rise of authoritarian individuals, and help new republics adapt to democratic principles by nominating political leadership and helping with political education (Ezrow 2011). Parties also play a role in interest aggregation, political research, organizing government agendas, training new leaders, and sustaining democratic institutions (Ezrow 2011; Dode 2010; Kiiza 2005). The fulfillment of these responsibilities is especially important within new democratic systems. Those who research the role of political parties in newer democracies state that political parties are the primary safeguard against reactionary elements and corruption within governments (Ezrow 2011). This is confirmed by research focused on new democracies in Eastern Europe which found that political parties played an essential role in "identifying, politicizing, and representing social issues" (McAllister and White 2009). It has also been found that the effectiveness and success of new democratic governments depend on the role that political parties play in placing social and political conflicts within a democratic framework (McAllister and White 2009).

With the growing role of political parties in established democracies, as well as their importance to the health of democratic institutions, political researchers have begun to find that political parties themselves are now often perceived as being part of the institution of government itself. Ingrid van Biezen notes that in many established democracies, the state offers public funding to political parties and in doing so has become increasingly involved in regulations of internal party affairs (2004). She believes that these changes to the state's influence on political parties are part of a trend whereby political parties are becoming legitimized and considered necessary institutions for a functioning democracy (van Biezen 2004).

Party Systems and Democracy

The literature on party systems is more focused than the literature on political parties as a whole. A party system is a relationship between a country's constitution, the electoral laws, and the number of political parties that may exist in that nation (Dode 2010). A party system can also be described as the structure of political competition and cooperation within a nation (Croissant and Volkel 2012). The most common forms of party systems are one-party, two-party, and multi-party systems, which are defined by having a specific number of major political parties as denoted by the name of the party system. Just as political parties play an essential role in establishing and sustaining democracies, the system of parties within a nation itself also plays a role.

In a study on Nigerian democracy, Dode finds that Nigeria's democracy suffers from a lack of competitive democratic institutions, especially the lack of institutionalized political parties (2010). Dode suggests that this lack of democratic competitiveness contributes to Nigeria's struggle to develop its democratic institutions and in turn suggests that Nigeria needs more political competition, including a larger number of institutionalized parties, before better democratic institutions can be developed (Dode 2010). This research on the effect of party systems on the development of democratic institutions is further discussed by Croissant and Völkel, who also study the notion that the type of party system can affect the development of democracy within a nation (2012). They observed multiple newer democracies in East Asia to see the level of democratic development in those nations, and determined that East Asian politics often had inchoate party systems or weak multi-party systems.

An inchoate party system is a party system where there is little party institutionalization and greater levels of factionalism. Sometimes weak multi-party systems are referred to as inchoate party systems; in other cases, inchoate systems can refer to systems where independent politicians make up the majority of government. These systems are often attributed with high turnover rates in political offices and were found to be a liability to the development of democratic systems (Croissant and Völkel 2012).

Public Trust, Political Parties, and Party Systems

Though there is consensus in the literature on the importance of political parties and party systems within a democracy the research is divided as to whether greater numbers of institutionalized parties result in an increase of the public's confidence in government. A survey focused on public confidence in Alberta, Canada, for instance, found that the general confidence in Alberta's government institutions was not wholly dependent on electoral or party systems; rather, it was primarily dependent on provincial government transparency and the centralization of power within the provincial governments (Johnston, Krahn, Harrison 2006). The survey proposed the idea of establishing a proportional election system that would increase the number of institutionalized parties. However, very few individuals who participated in the survey believed that the reform would affect their trust in the government (Johnston, Krahn, Harrison 2006). This idea that party systems do not influence the public's confidence in the government is backed by other literature, such as a study on the levels of public contentment towards democracy in Norway, Sweden, and America. The researchers performing the study found that the American two-party system generated more discontent than the Norwegian multi-party system, but had similar levels of discontent as Sweden, despite Sweden having a competitive party system (Miller and Ola 1990).

Other researchers have performed studies which do suggest that the type of party system a nation has impacts the citizens' confidence in the government. Christopher J. Anderson and Christine A. Guillory conducted a study in which they separated countries into two groups. The first group being countries which have majoritarian democratic systems where power was centralized in the political parties which receive the majority support, while the second group is countries which have a consensual democratic system where political parties who receive less support also have sway in government politics (Anderson and Guillory 2008). They based these classifications off the Lijpharts index which observes various aspects of government institutions to determine whether a democracy is more majoritarian or consensual in nature including the effective number of political parties (Anderson and Guillory 2008).

Anderson and Guillory found that individuals whose political party was not the ruling party or in a coalition with the ruling party within majoritarian systems developed more distrust in government than those whose political party was not the ruling party or in a coalition with the ruling party within consensual systems (Anderson and Guillory 2008). Other studies on party systems support this study by suggesting that proportional electoral systems, or systems in which government parties are more representative of the general public, do tend to affect the satisfaction that people have in government (Anderson 1998). One such study on the relationship between electoral systems and public satisfaction with democratic institutions found that the electoral systems within a nation were a greater indicator of the public's satisfaction in democratic institutions than the performance of the current government

(Anderson 1998). This finding is important to the research on party systems because proportional electoral systems are directly correlated with higher levels of party fragmentation, or the number of effective parties.

Public Confidence in Multi-Party and Two-Party Systems

Current literature indicates that trust and distrust are essential within the democratic system to legitimize the government and promote critical thinking in regards to its actions. The literature also suggests that political parties and party systems play an important role within these democratic systems. This paper is meant to add to this existing literature by determining whether or not the number of effective political parties within a country affects the levels of public confidence in government institutions. In doing so, we seek to focus on two questions: whether party systems affect trust and whether the American two-party system is detrimental to public confidence in government institutions compared to a party system with higher levels of party fragmentation.

In forming a theory on why having a multi-party system may result in more confidence in America's government, it is important to understand the goals of the founding fathers and whether the two-party system achieves these goals. To create a balance between trust and distrust in the government, the founders of the United States sought to create a system where the institutions of government prevented distrust in the political system and instead directed mistrust towards individual politicians (Abramson 2017). In other words, the founders' goal was to create a system with government institutions that were implemented to decentralize power from any specific group or person. This led to certain American institutions like the separation of powers, checks and balances, and state's rights. The founders hoped that establishing these institutions would promote trust and confidence in the system even if individuals mistrusted the politicians running it (Abramson 2017).

When it comes to political parties, decentralization of political power amongst greater numbers of parties is referred to as party system fragmentation. Single party states would have low levels of party system fragmentation, while multi-party states would have higher levels of party system fragmentation. The two-party system that has prevailed in American politics fails to achieve high levels of party fragmentation; in fact, rather than decentralizing power, our two-party system allows two organizations to concentrate political power between the political elites of those two organizations. Not only does the two-party system allow political power to become concentrated in the hands of the few, the concentration of power in two primary sources results in partisanship and polarization. As Americans are forced into one camp or the other in order to see policies they support enacted, they gradually lose faith in the opposing party meaning that Americans will be more likely to distrust government institutions when their party is out of power (Hetherington and Rudolph 2018).

Another folly of a two-party system is that when people distrust politicians, it is difficult to elect new leaders because there are only two viable candidates in either

election. Candidates running in elections within a two-party system typically occupy opposing ideological spaces, which could prevent an individual from voting for the candidate they trust more to protect their ideological interests. In terms of the general public trust, two-party systems merely swap one distrustful party in the public's eye out for the other party, thereby causing a cycle of distrust (Miller and Ola 1990).

Is it possible that instituting a multi-party system can fix this? Three main arguments suggest it could. First, multi-party systems allow for greater fragmentation of power. Unlike the two-party systems that cause political power to be centralized in two large coalitions, a multi-party system allows power to be distributed to three or more parties which generally results in those parties being pushed to work together and find compromises in order to govern efficiently. Given the theory that democratization fosters public confidence in government, a party system where power is extensively distributed amongst multiple groups could lead to more public confidence in government (Abramson 2017).

Second, a multi-party system increases the number of choices and options that citizens of the country have. While a two-party system creates a minimal number of choices and often forces people towards two politically acceptable ideological options and results in citizens being unable to remove corrupt politicians, a multi-party system does not have this downside (Drutman 2020). Alternatively, a multi-party system allows people of various opinions and interests across the political spectrum to have representation in the government (Drutman 2020). This increased number and diversity of choice for political officers also grants voters an easier time removing corrupt politicians from power during elections because they have more candidates and candidates closer to their ideological beliefs to choose from. This competitiveness may cause public confidence in government to increase (Slomczynski and Janicka 2014).

Lastly, a multi-party system is theorized to end the distrust of government caused by political polarization. As mentioned above, two-party systems cause political partisanship and polarization due to the binary nature of said systems. In most multi-party systems, governments are formed through coalitions since no one party has enough power to run the government alone. As multi-party systems encourage cooperation between parties in order for parties to achieve their goals and form viable working governments, many theorize that multi-party systems reasonably generate less political partisanship and polarization.

Can Voter Trust Influence Party Systems

It is important to note that some suggest that the relationship should be inverted, where public trust influences the specific type of party system a nation has rather than the other way around. We can reject this idea on the basis that the institutionalization of parties within a government is not due to voter behavior but rather is caused by institutional factors such as electoral rules. It is typically the electoral rules that determine the type of party system within a country because electoral rules delineate

the probability that particular parties gain representation and influence the electoral strategies of political parties and voters. The establishment of electoral procedures and institutions precedes the confidence citizens of a nation have in the system (Anderson 1998).

Less fragmented party systems use first-past-the-post election rules where one candidate is selected to represent a particular district and needs only 50% of the vote, or closed-list proportional voting where people vote for parties as a whole without knowing the candidate tend to have less institutionalized parties and party fragmentation. Systems where people vote for parties and can see the candidates within that, or systems in which people can rank their preferred candidates and vote for multiple typically have more political parties represented in government and thus more fragmentation (ACE Project 1998). In addition to the effect of the electoral system on party systems, the institutionalized basis by which parties receive money can also affect what parties become institutionalized in society (ACE Project 1998). The party system is affected by numerous laws and legal circumstances, which in turn also affect the political parties themselves. Because of these circumstances, we can determine that party and party systems affect voter trust in government and not the reverse (Anderson 1998).

Methodology for Data Analysis

In order confirm or reject this theory, I have outlined two hypothesis which we can test:

Hypothesis 1: Party systems have a significant effect on public trust in government institutions.

Hypothesis 2: A nation with a multi-party system will have greater amounts of public confidence in government institutions than a two-party system.

To measure public confidence in the government, I gathered data from the World Values Survey Time Series, a collection of all of the data collected by the World Values Survey. This Time Series contains interview data from nearly half a million respondents in more than a hundred countries over a forty-year time span, making it the optimal source for data collection. I used the data from six questions about the individual respondent's confidence in various government institutions. These institutions are the police, civil service, parliament, political parties, elections, and government as a whole. For each of these institutions, respondents were asked to rank their overall confidence in the institution on a scale of one to four.

To obtain my data for party systems, I observed past legislative and executive elections using the Inter-Parliamentary Union Parling Database and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems. I did this in order to determine what party system a given surveyed nation had during the time when the nation was part of the World Values Survey. This allowed me to account for the effects of changes in party systems

within various nations over a period of time. With this data, I categorized each nation into five significant types of party systems: inchoate party systems, one party, dominant party, two-party, and multi-party systems.

To ensure I kept my approach to determining party systems objective, I used standardized measures for each party system. Inchoate party systems were defined as systems wherein established political parties had weak representation in government and the majority of government was made up of independent politicians or loose coalitions of independents that did not contest multiple elections. One-party systems were defined as systems wherein only one party and its satellite parties were allowed to hold government positions. Dominant party systems were defined as any system where one party and its satellite parties consistently controlled at least 50% of the legislature and controlled the executive branch. Two-party systems were defined as any system where two political parties consistently controlled the executive branch and consistently held at least 90% of the legislature. Finally, multi-party systems were defined as any system wherein more than two political parties have the ability to participate in the government or opposition at a viable level. These were determined by the two largest parties constantly holding less than 90% of the legislature when added together, regardless of their control of the executive branch. I then created a binary variable for each of the party systems so they could be compared against each other.

Using the data gathered from the sources mentioned above, I ran six regression models, one for each of the government institutions that I was measuring to determine the relationship between the party system and confidence in government institutions. In each regression, the confidence in each specific government institution was the dependent variable, and the party systems were included as independent variables. I omitted the two-party system variable from the regressions so that each of the other party systems' effect on public confidence in each government institution could be compared with the two-party systems' effect on public confidence.

When running these regressions, I made sure to control for individual-level variables of income, social class, education level, and employment status that could affect the individual's confidence in government institutions using other data from the World Values Survey. To control for national economic factors, I collected the data for national GDP per Capita from Macrotrends. At the systemic level, I also included time-fixed effects and national fixed effects. These fixed effects will allow me to account for constants within global trends for a particular year and constant variables within each nation.

To test our hypothesis, we must establish objective criteria to confirm or deny the two hypotheses that build it. The first hypothesis will be confirmed individually for each regression if the p-value of the test confirms a statistically significant relationship between the types of party systems and the amount of public confidence for that regression's government institution. The second hypothesis will be confirmed individually for each government institution if the regression coefficient for the multi-party system is positive as this will show that there is a greater public confidence towards the institution within a multi-party system compared to a two-party system.

These coefficients must be statistically significant in order to be accepted. The original hypotheses will be rejected if they do not meet the required standards or the results are not statistically significant.

Data Analysis

For the convenience of the reader I have included a chart with my collected data below that can be used to follow along with the analysis of the data:

	Confidence in Police	Confidence in Civil Services	Confidence in Political Parties	Confidence in Elections	Confidence in Legislature	Confidence in Government
Inchoate Party System	-.368706** (.0374216)	-.5376879** (.0376289)	-.4109875** (.0376682)	-1.132653** (.0638746)	-.5624598** (.0396047)	-0.403908** (.0374673)
One-Party System	.591726** (.0439095)	1.043568** (.0420006)	1.289746** .0401882	1.036064** (.0633248)	1.039788** (.042339)	1.11325** (.0437179)
Dominant Party System	-.162225** (.0347039)	-.1249888** (.0324003)	.0381486 (.0318633)	.9301176** (.0551608)	.0629252 (.0335845)	0.129063** (.0344372)
Multi-Party System	-.126745** (.0341636)	-.2208628** (.0317848)	-.23929** (.0312628)	.3069301** (.046655)	-.3108823** (.0329431)	-0.186566** (.033923)
Education Level	-.027619** (.000913)	-.0086915** (.0008832)	-.0150708** (.000871)	-.0305872** (.0019286)	-.0133014** (.000913)	-.0250634** (.0009399)
Income Level	.0037961 (.000923)	.0002213 (.0008861)	.0036885** (.000876)	.0123062** (.0018754)	-.000057 (.0009157)	-.0027816** (.00095)
Social Class	.0354125 (.0021754)	.036206** (.0020941)	.0310162** (.0020594)	.0208438** (.0041023)	.0358139** (.0021587)	.0385822** (.0022336)
GDP per Capita	.0000114 (.0000004)	.0000064** (.0000004)	.0000022** (.00000039)	.0000127** (.00000098)	0.00000674 (.00000041)	0.000007** (.00000042)
Constant	2.135764 (.0413601)	-2.491407 (.0396461)	-2.568077 (.0379014)	1.195427 (.0639331)	-2.016631** (.0400335)	-2.069085 (.0413547)
System Level Controls: Fixed Effects for Year and Fixed Effects for Country were not included in the regression analysis due to the amount of variables, but they were included in the regression itself to control for system level differences in year and country						
** Statistically Significant with P-value<.05 Standard Error Included in Parenthesis						

Using this data, we can confirm that the first hypothesis, "Party systems have a significant effect on public trust in government institutions," is valid for the majority of relationships. Every relationship between confidence in government institutions and two-party, multi-party, inchoate, and single-party systems is statistically significant. Only dominant party systems seem to not be statistically significant in every case with them having no statistically significant relationship between the dominant

party system and confidence in parties and elections. We can confirm in nearly all of the relationships that the party system does have a significant effect on the individual's confidence in the specified institution. In order to confirm the second hypothesis, "a nation with a multi-party system will have greater amounts of public trust than a two-party system," we must look at the regression coefficient of the multi-party system while the two-party system has been omitted on each government institution.

The data shows that multi-party systems promote a 0.127 decrease in confidence in the police, a 0.221 decrease in confidence in civil services, a 0.239 decrease in confidence in parties, a 0.311 decrease in confidence in the legislature, and a 0.187 decrease in confidence in the government as a whole in comparison with a two-party system. Two-party systems inspire more public confidence in government institutions than multi-party systems in nearly every case. Multi-party systems only promote greater confidence in a nation's electoral institutions, promoting a 0.307 increase in electoral confidence. Using this data, we can reject the hypothesis that a nation with a multi-party system would have higher public confidence in government and reject the theory that they result in greater levels of public confidence in government institutions than two-party systems. Instead, multi-party systems only seem to inspire higher public confidence in government institutions regarding elections.

Discussion

When looking at the rest of the data, we can see there is a trend where the party systems with less institutionalized parties and less party competition seem to promote more confidence in government institutions at an individual level than those with more institutionalized parties or more political competition. We can see that individuals in multi-party systems have more confidence in government than those in inchoate party systems where political power is the most fragmented, people in two-party systems have more confidence in government institutions than those in multi-party systems, and people living in one-party systems have more confidence in government than those in two-party systems. These results suggest that the theory and hypothesis on multi-parties promoting greater public confidence should be reversed. Instead of higher party system fragmentation resulting in higher rates of confidence, it seems that less party system fragmentation does. The only party system in which this trend is not seen is the dominant party system, likely because dominant party systems are less defined and have institutions similar to other party systems allowing them to be formed out of or into other systems without major institutional change. Knowing that systems with less fragmented party systems generated more public confidence, the question is prompted of why respondents living in countries with less fragmented party systems report more confidence in government institutions than those in more fragmented party systems.

There are multiple possible explanations for this phenomenon. The first explanation behind why countries with less fragmented party systems correlate with higher public confidence is that those systems are inherently more authoritarian. Individuals

have a fear of responding negatively to questions about their confidence in government. There is also the possibility that systems with less competitive party systems have more political apathy due to the lack of competition. So long as the needs guaranteed by the government are met, apathetic people would not display distrust based on party systems. Though these theories make sense on the surface and can explain this phenomenon in one-party states, they fail to explain our main concern: why do two-party systems end up promoting higher levels of public confidence in government institutions than multi-party systems?

When trying to determine reasons that the two-party systems generate more public confidence than multi-party systems, it is most worthwhile to examine the original arguments given supporting the theory that a multi-party system would produce more public confidence in government than a two-party system. Those who supported this theory focused most of their arguments on three points:

- The decentralization of political power through party fragmentation
- The need in multi-party systems to form coalition governments encouraging political cooperation and discouraging political polarization
- The increased amount of representation in a multi-party system

Though these points seem like they would promote public confidence in government, we can use these points to see why a multi-party system would actually generate less public confidence in government.

The first strength of a multi-party system, mentioned by advocates of the multi-party system, is that multi-party systems fragment political power between a greater number of organizations. This prevents the monopolization of power by a few dominant parties. There is the potential for this party fragmentation to create problems such as inefficient and instability. Within a two-party system, passing bills would generally require only one political party to support it, within a multi-party system, however, in order to pass bills, it is often necessary for a broad coalition of parties to support the bill, meaning that in order for a bill to pass it must appeal to multiple parties. This can make it difficult for multi-party systems to respond to crises. Not only does this affect bills, but it also causes problems in forming governments.

Within multi-party systems, coalitions are commonly required in order to form a stable government. The more parties in a government, the harder it is to form a coalition, as governing parties must compromise with each other when agreeing to a governing agenda. Generally, this makes multi-party systems more unstable. Fluctuations in the success of parties and the governing coalitions can cause uncertainty in government, given it is common for coalitions to break apart when the parties within the coalition disagree. Frequently, these disagreements send coalition governments into early and frequent election cycles (Midlarsky 2016). Within a two-party system governing parties do not have to form coalitions. This allows for greater stability in government as they do not need to call early elections frequently, nor do the parties break apart as easily as a coalition (Midlarsky 2016).

Coalition governments can also undo the improvement of electoral representation that advocates of the multi-party system suggest would occur upon its

implementation. In forming coalition governments, parties must cooperate and find compromises to their agendas to form a stable government. Though this cooperation is mentioned as a strength, it can cause parties to fail to fully represent the voters, especially when the parties form coalition governments that the people do not want or expect (Karp and Bowler 2001). While people have more choices and are better represented in whom they vote for in a multi-party system, coalition building politics mean that there is no guarantee that the policies the voter supported would be enacted, even if the political party they voted for won more seats than the other parties. This failure of parties to recognize their voters' interests can increase voters' mistrust (Karp and Bowler 2001).

Though coalition-building seems to be the primary cause of concern with multi-party systems, advocates still argue that coalitions found in multi-party systems are beneficial because they help reduce polarization. The research on this topic contradicts this aspect of the theory, however. Research in the comparative study between the American two-party system and European multi-party systems has yielded the opinion that there is no significant difference in the amount of polarization in America compared to European nations (Knudsen 2020). Given that the polarization seen in the systems does not wildly differ, multi-party systems cannot be attributed to a decrease in polarization.

Finally, another possibility is that the very idea that a multi-party system leads to greater democratization was incorrect. Anastasija Malachova suggests that multi-party systems do not automatically lead to a more "democratic" sense of government (Malachova 2012). She recognizes that, in theory, greater competition and viable political parties should lead to greater democratization. However, in reality, multi-party systems do not universally lead to more democratization within a country (Malachova 2012).

These ideas, while plausible, are still only theories on why multi-party systems are unable to generate the levels of public confidence in the government that two-party systems do. Other factors that were not measured could be determinants of the difference in public confidence between multi-party systems and two-party systems, such as the number of effective political parties, the type of electoral system, or even the types of political parties. In order to fully determine the causes behind this relationship, more research must be done on the origination of public confidence in various multi-party and two-party systems.

Conclusion and Implications

The two-party system in America has been blamed for many of the problems we face in the political arena, including the lack of public confidence. Those who make this claim cite the multi-party system as a better substitute for it, given the competitive and democratic nature of the multi-party system. Multi-party systems allow for greater representation, less partisanship, more political cooperation, and the distribution of power amongst more political groups. However, these strengths

may be weaknesses when it comes to the field of public confidence in government institutions. Using the data on public confidence in various government institutions from the World Values Survey and categorizing the nations into five different party systems using the Inter-Parliamentary Union's Election data and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, I discovered that this perceived connection between a competitive multi-party system and greater public confidence in government does not exist.

Instead, the data showed that multi-party systems weaken public confidence in government rather than strengthen it. The data also revealed that party systems with less fragmentation of political parties had more public confidence in government institutions than those with more fragmented systems of parties. Within one party systems, this may be explained by tendencies in authoritarian systems such as fear to report and apathy. However, these explanations fail to explain the central area of our concern, which is why two-party systems have an overall higher public confidence in government. The factors within multi-party systems that cause mistrust in the system may be explained by the very things that its advocates suggest would promote confidence in government.

While advocates suggest that multi-party systems will improve public confidence in government institutions through reduced polarization, more representation, and reduced concentration of power within a nation, instead, it is the case that fundamental aspects of a multi-party system negate these or twist these to produce an overall lower rate of public confidence. One may claim that a fragmented party system and coalition government multi-party systems will reduce partisanship and polarization, but there is no actual evidence for that argument to be. Instead, the fragmented party system and coalition governments lead to instability, a lack of representation, and inefficiency.

Overall the data shows that introducing a multi-party system in the United States would fail to increase the amount of public confidence but would likely, according to the data, cause public confidence to decrease. With this in mind, we confirm that the problem of public confidence in America's public institutions does not arise from a two-party system. Instead, we should look into other possible causes of our confidence problem in order to find ways by which we can increase the public's confidence in America's government institutions.

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