# Twitter Thread by lime ■■■



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## I think it’s better if you don’t ask “why were other parties unable to stake out a position?” but “how were the two parties able to claim such broad swaths of the political landscape?” No easy answers here of course, it’s one of the largest questions in political history.

> Who has a good paper on why the US has just two parties?
>
> It\u2019s not first past the post (Canada, UK) or presidentialism (Mexico, Brazil) so what gives?
>
> — Matthew Yglesias \U0001f366 (@mattyglesias) November 28, 2020

I think the electoral systems, more so first past the post than presidentialism, come into it, but they’re not the main factor. Most of it comes down to America’s, all together now, material conditions.

As @cushbomb has been noting a lot recently, America’s wealth of wide open land which you could keep settling allowed potential labour unrest to be diffused. There was always more to get.

So you don’t end up with a Labour party, and around the time other countries did, America was going through the progressive era, which both parties were flirting with. The Socialists and Communists were repressed, so they couldn’t be the left alternative either.

The Progressive Party probably came the closest of anyone to breaking the GOP-Dem dynamic but honestly if they did they probably would have supplanted one of those parties entirely, just as the Republicans supplanted the Whigs, so it would have just been another 2 party system.

There’s a lot of other factors going on here, a lot probably has to do with the Civil War. In the years before the war and just following there were some pretty strong third parties at the legislative level.

Could be the War really altered the national psyche and turned people towards this one on one dynamic. I dunno that part is just throwing something out there. Like I said, hard question to answer so I’m just putting down a few of my thoughts.

The New Deal seems to have been another big third party killer, though I can’t really put my finger on exactly why. Take a look at this page and the ones it links to, hardly any people elected from proper third parties to Congress since the 1940s

https://t.co/ycFqTUNjH3

I should amend that, not just hardly any, none. The NY ballot sharing parties don't count, nor does Joe Lieberman's fake party.

In terms of Governors you have Ventura and the Reform Party, which put up a good show in a couple presidential races too. And then Connecticut and Alaska each had a third party candidate beat both parties. That's about it.