

Abstract

Barack Obama's administration inherited one of the most severe economic crises in the history of the United States, which severely undermined the American public's confidence in the country's political and economic future. Declining trust in the federal government and its handling of the economic recession gave rise to two influential movements, the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street, which were thoroughly critical of the country's leadership. Both movements made use of a strong populist rhetoric and mobilized masses by denouncing the political and financial elites, calling for returning control over the country's fate into the hands of ordinary citizens. My master's thesis is an analysis of the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street that focuses on the ideology and goals that drove these popular movements, as well as highlights the most crucial commonalities and differences between them. I argue in favor of interpreting the ideologies behind the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street as two distinct types of populism, in addition to which I emphasize the different degree of outside support the two movements enjoyed during their rise to prominence. To determine how influential the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street became during Barack Obama's presidency, I also study their relationship with the political establishment and review to what extent these two movements managed to integrate themselves into the United States' bipartisan political system, as well as the impact of this process.