

Factors in american democracy



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American Democracy

1. The seven key functions of interest groups.

The interest groups are organizations that may be formed in reaction to certain issues either as a single event or threat that may later become institutionalized. They are private organizations that endeavor to influence public officials to respond the shared aspirations of their members without holding to political power. They stimulate interest in public affairs through members representation based on a criterion of shared beliefs rather than by geography. Interest groups provide useful data to governments and are a means through which political participation is attained hence they act as a check and balance. This is a fundamental role that manifest itself in politics, education, business etc. These Interest groups may be for profit while others are for non profit. One function of interest groups is to garner representation that may be political.

They seek out memberships as more members more power hence attaining a position where election outcome is influenced. Therefore securing money for its cause is central and advantageous in order for it to sustain itself and be effective at lobbying and influence government policy. They have the responsibility of spreading information to the general public because they pose information that either the public or the policymakers may lack. This helps it to gain more followers and influence policy makers to take certain favorable actions. They have an inbuilt mechanism to change policy both in both private and public spheres. Interest groups do educate both their own constituents and the public and by this members are educated on the most recent developments on the issues at hand. With their developed expertise

on a particular field or policy area they are normally called to testify before congress on their position concerning legislation (Aldrich, 1995).

2. The two-party system today: is it in decline or in resurgence?

Over the last three decades pundits have claimed that the American political parties are on the decline in the US politics. Their role has been reducing in the political process and it has been inferred that they are not a useful tool any more. The political action committee (PACs) has supplemented the political parties rendering them to be outdated. The view is reinforced with the idea that candidates are independent of political parties to get elected rendering the parties to be less significant. Parties do not make significant and purposeful stand on issues but are concerned with accommodating followers from the middle of the ideological spectrum rendering them irrelevant to progression of society. The party leaders do not make important decisions on presidential candidate as a result of party primaries and committees.

The role of the party in educating and influencing the electorate has been overtaken by the mass electronic media. Democratic Party reformed the delegate selection process through the 1968 convention that led to increase usage of the primaries leading to an increased youth, women and minorities representation. These reforms in the Democratic Party have made it to be reflective to the view of academicians and intellectuals at the expense of the working masses, unionist, elected officials etc who have the numbers. A large number of citizens are distrustful to the major parties viewing them as corrupt institutions that circumvent the issues at hand, have no ideas and follow public opinions rather than generate them. Nevertheless political

parties still do play a crucial role in American politics (Reichley, 2000). The parties are transforming but not declining despite the political environment being more candidates centered than before. Today parties are better funded with permanent headquarters.

They are more capable to providing assistance to states and local party organizations due to the strengthened financial base. They have defined themselves as providers of expertise to the needy but they cannot themselves acquire it. They have shown unity during roll call votes in congress and after the 1968 convection the Democratic Party replaced the unit rule with system of proportionality. The Republican Party has given the national committees more control over presidential campaigns and urged state parties to encourage broader participation of all groups. Today both parties do provide training sessions for candidates on campaign planning, marketing, fund raising, volunteers and campaign scheduling. The two major political parties have demonstrated adaptability to change with time and respond to constitutes demand despite the cultural and structural forces that perpetuate the two party system showing little signs of relenting.

3. The three types of third parties.

The US electoral system works against a proliferation of political parties but minor parties and independents have still managed to run for office. Third parties are created for various reasons; a split within the republican and democratic parties often represents factions over policy issues. These splinter parties have been at the forefront in gaining popularity and the electorate college (Aldrich, 1995). Ideologically related parties and issue

advocacy parties do cover both ends of the political continuum. These political parties are formed around single issues e. g. green energy. Voters normally vote for third parties because they are trying to send a message to the two big parties often with success. Both the two major parties have embraced reforms and programs that were often rejected when presented by third parties.

Third parties in the long run do fail to maintain themselves at local and state levels due to skimming of their talent by the major parties. Their members are always small to have any domineering influence plus lacking the financial resources to carry out effective campaigns. The two major parties consolidate their dominance of the political system through high profile campaigns and conventions subsidized by tax payer's money. Nevertheless they have been successful at calling for attention to an otherwise ignored, misrepresented or surprised issues. They have over the years managed to get the major political parties to adopt the most important portion of third party platforms as theirs giving the far sighted voter a means of making tangible statements with greater impact on the direction of the country. They work to enhance the prospects and credibility of lesser known ideas and lesser known candidates to gain and solidify ballot access. Their activity provides whoever wins office with a more latitude and public support in choosing new public policy approaches or solutions to existing or future problems or concerns (Schaffner, 2012).

4. Elements of referendums, initiatives, and recalls.

Many countries that are representative's democracies permit three forms of political action providing limited direct democracy. These are initiative,

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referendum and recall. An initiative is a means by which a petition signed by a certain minimum number of registered voters can force a public vote on a proposed law, amendments or ordinance. It allows citizens to bypass their state legislature through placing proposed statutes or constitutional amendments on the ballot. In America twenty four states have adopted the initiative proceeds in their constitutions. Two types of initiatives exist. Direct initiatives are submitted to the legislature which may act on the proposal. This depends on the state hence the question may go to the ballot and if rejected a different proposal is submitted. For indirect process the legislature submits a competing measure that appears on the ballot together with the original proposal examples states of Nevada, Ohio and Massachusetts. In Utah and Washington proponents either chooses the direct or indirect method (Schaffner, 2012).

A referendum is a direct method of voting where an entire electorate is asked to either accept or reject an article proposal. This may lead to ratification of a new constitution, amendment, law or recall of an elected official. Legislative referendum is where the legislature refers a measure to the voters for approval. Popular referendum is a measure that appears on the ballot as a result of a voter petition. Legislative referendums are less controversial than citizen initiatives with high success rates. Popular referendum is a means that allow voters to approved or repeal an act of the legislature. Law passed that citizens do not approved for may lead to gathering of signatures to demand a popular vote. Advisory referendum is where the legislature and in some states the governor places a question on the ballot to asses voter opinion where the results are not binding. A recall is

a procedure where voters remove an elected official from office through a direct vote when sufficient voters sign a petition. It allows citizens to remove from office a public official before the expiry of the term. Recall is a political device different from impeachment that is a legal device (Aldrich, 1995).

5. Media Bias

Professionals who constitute America's mainstream news media are mainly left-oriented and Democrats. They make it clear that they are giving their opinions and analysis of the news as they perceive it rather than being impartial and focus on research so as to represent relevant facts to the audience. A more useful way of measuring the news media's political and ideological makeup is to examine what the professionals in the industry believe about a wide array of social, ethical, and political issues. Bias manifests itself not in the form of outright lies but as a function of what reporters choose not to tell their audience. They omit factors so as to avoid contradicting the political narrative they wish to propagate.

Some managers in American newsrooms are so ideologically entrenched that there is a feeling and discussion that some of them have a difficult time reviewing a story that reflects negatively upon government or the administration. Politicians are a biased lot and they belong to political parties that champion policies and ideologies. Irrespective of their thoughts, these ideologies are common since they do perceive their political conversations as politics. Journalists do also speak from a political position but the industry ethics and the objective of fairness do influence their profession that endeavors to do the right thing. This objective is met through fairness to those concerned with the news covered, completeness and accuracy. The <https://assignbuster.com/factors-in-american-democracy/>

American press is a unified voice with a distinct bias that generates a simplistic thinking that fits the needs of an ideological struggle. American media bias is as a result of journalist failure to reflect upon the meaning of the premise and assumptions that supports their practice because the mass media wanted to apply a narrative structure to ambiguous events in order to create a coherent and casual sense of events (Reichley, 2000).

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