

# The tea party movement



Many organizations and parties have been formed in the USA by different individuals in order to address various issues that affect them. The nature and composition of these parties vary considerably depending on their motives. The Tea Party Movement is one of these parties and it is currently gaining much prominence across the USA. “ The Tea Party Movement is regarded as a populist political association, which is conventional and libertarian” (O' Hara and Malkin 22). Since 2009, this movement has been primarily preoccupied with political issues. Tea Party is a terminology that was derived from a colonial protest known as the Boston Tea party.

### Aims and Objectives

The primary aims of this organization focus on socioeconomic issues that impact on the USA citizens. In this case, this organization has staged several protests with an aim of challenging the federal government's proposal to hike taxes. “ It also supports the reduction of government's expenditure and relieving of national debt crisis” (O' Hara and Malkin 45). In addition, it encourages proper interpretation and implementation of various provisions entrenched in the American constitution. In this context, the Tea Party Movement struggles to preserve the rights of citizens.

The Tea Party Movement has often used protests as a traditional tool for pushing forward their agenda and demands. For instance, in early 2009 the Tea Party staged a demonstration in a bid to sabotage the idea of imposing obesity taxes, which was a proposal formulated by David Paterson. In this regard, the party also demanded for government fiscal responsibility. During the protest, some individuals challenged the 2008 Economic Stabilization Act

and numerous reform bills aimed at improving health care. Scott Rasmussen contends that, “ the activities of the Tea Party were sparked off by the bailing out of financial institutions, which were conducted by both the Bush and Obama governments respectively” (Zernike 23).

Environmental conservation is another area of concern that has been treated quite differently from what people would expect, by the Tea Party members. According to the CBS news Polls results, only a few supporters of this movement took the issue of global warming seriously (David 9). The carbon dioxide emissions regulations that were set by the government have also been seriously opposed by many of its members.

### Membership and Demographics

Many individuals have been interested in knowing much more about the Tea Party. Consequently, many aspects the Tea party has been examined in order to identify its structures. The demographic composition of this party has equally drawn the attention of many individuals, who are interested in knowing its membership. In this case, several membership and demographic polls have been carried out on the Tea Party, in order to reveal its exact composition.

The polls sometimes provide conflicting results with slight variations in terms of membership figures. Nonetheless, they mostly reveal that the key supporters of the Tea Party are mainly drawn from the white population. When a gender perspective is adopted in this demographic analysis, it indicates that the Tea Party mainly attracts married male adults, who are over forty five years old. A significant characteristic among its members is

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that they are extremely conservative compared to the general population. Apart from this, most of them have high status in the society in terms of education and wealth.

Polls further indicate that a good number of the Tea Party followers seem to be favoring the ideals of Republicans, and most of them have a low opinion on the Democratic Party. Critics of the Tea Party argue that this movement is racial because it ignores other races in America especially the black community. Moreover, many Tea Party associates advocate for stringent immigration measures particularly on illegal immigrants. This further reveals the racial nature of this movement (Rasmussen and Schoen 233).

#### Leadership and Groups

The leadership structure of this organization is quite weak in sense that it lacks central leadership. Although it lacks central leadership, some of its members are part of the influential institutions like the Senate and the House of representatives. The influential members, therefore, guide the activities of this movement. The Tea Party is also composed of fluid caucuses that operate both at local and national level, but they choose their own agendas and goals. “ The Tea Party’s noteworthy national members include Republican officials like Ron Paul, Michele Bachmann, Dickey Armey and other Republican members” (O’ Hara and Malkin 134). Indeed, Ron Paul is believed to have developed the idea of this movement. Therefore, it is the above mentioned individuals that offer guidance to the Tea Party.

There has been some debate on whether the Tea Party Movement qualifies to be a party or not. In my view, this movement is not a party because it has

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various affiliate organizations, which define their own objectives independently, but they focus on achieving a common end. In my view, it can be compared to the Feminist Movement that encompasses many women's organizations with different principles, but one objective.

However, some individuals contend that it is a party because it is used as a platform for pushing political agenda and endorsing Republican candidates. Nonetheless, since it lacks clear structures and central leadership it fails to qualify to be a party.

### The Future of the Tea Party

The future of this movement can be predetermined by the kind of perception the general public has about it. One of the instruments that has been used to examine the support for this movement is the media opinion polls. However, the main challenge with this kind of analysis is that it sometimes gives skewed results. Nonetheless, a close analysis of the media opinion polls indicates that the Tea Party has received fairly well by a number of people.

“ The election cycle that was held in 2010 revealed that the Tea Party backed one hundred and thirty eight candidates who vied for the Congress membership” (New York Times/CBS News 5). However, the outcome of this process demonstrated that the Tea Party is less efficient in endorsing candidates. This is because only thirty two percent of its endorsements were successful in the elections. According to the surveys conducted by many researchers, the Tea Party has steadily gained support since last year until the debt-ceiling crisis, which affected its popularity. The Gallop Poll indicated that 28 percent of adults dismissed the Tea Party's ideas, while twenty five

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percent supported it. On the other hand, a CNN poll showed fifty one percent of its disapproval, and only thirty one percent approved it. This trend is likely to continue during the 2012 elections, and it might jeopardize the success of many Republican candidates who identify themselves with it (New York Times/CBS News 3).

## Conclusion

The above discussion has pointed out various features and aims of the Tea Party Movement. It has also revealed that the Tea Party participates in various socioeconomic issues of America. This movement basically supports the Republican candidates, and it also aims at reinforcing their interests. In my view, the Tea Party will have an impact on the next presidential elections. However, its effectiveness is not very clear because it does not seem to have a steady support as indicated above. The Tea Party Movement is also likely to become less popular in future, if it fails to address issues of racism and partisan politics, which its critics have used to condemn it. It is also evident that the Tea Party does not favor the interests of the common citizens and this will seriously impact on it in future.