

Political parties essay sample

[Politics](#), [Democracy](#)



In a representative democracy, political parties play a significant role. They form the bases of political organization around which people can elect their representatives. A representative democracy is form of government that is usually founded on principle of having elected individuals represent their people. This means that a representative form of democracy cannot exist without having a mechanism for representation. This mechanism is borne out of having a independent ruling body that holds office for a defined election period to preside over political parties representatives in democratic elections (Sisk & Korykov, 2005). Therefore, political parties are foundation of a representative democracy. Political parties provide organizations around which individuals can show their leadership characteristics and seek mandate of their electorates to represent them.

Political parties are important intermediaries between the state and the society that articulate public views and preferences. Political parties acts as organizations around which policy formulation starts and are vetted by citizens through their voting rights. In a representative form of democracy, the main role of political parties should be reviewing of the current policies and coming up with policies that will better the life of their electorates. This is the main reason why competition on political arena has been based on policy formulation and those seeking election under their specific political parties are likely to spend a lot of their time explaining to their electorates how their specific policies will change their life for the better. Political parties that participate in competitive elections provide opportunities for citizen representation.

In a representative democracy, political parties do not work like interest groups or non-governmental organizations that are usually focused on one set of agenda (Sisk & Korykov, 2005). Political parties articulate wide range of agendas by influencing the political agenda. In most cases, political agenda will cut across a wide range of issues at national and local levels. To articulate their political agenda in full, political parties strive to become people's representative and therefore they have to contest elections regularly and make people understand their policies. Political parties do not become dormant once they have failed to win office but they continue to defend their party members against oppression by the party that is currently in power.

According to Fiorina, political parties provide a whole lot of benefits to the American society. Fiorina argues that the most important role of political parties is articulation of public policies. They let people that there is alternative to the current policies that may not work right. This means that the bases for building strong political parties that can fully represent members is through strengthening policy formulation because this will connect them well with their representatives. Fiorina also argues that political parties let the citizens know who they should hold accountable if they are not satisfied with the performance of the government. This means that political parties keep the citizens informed of the governance outcome thereby making people become aware of the future of their country. In line with Fiorina's argument, political parties should be the watchdog of the citizens. They should keep the government on its toes if it does not align with what is good for the country. Pomper presents a close view of political

parties in the United States like Fiorina but he differs in that he thinks political parties are doing all they can to live up to the expectation of the people. They have presented good policies in congress and presents competitive candidates for presidency. However, Pomper believes that there should be strategic change to the institution of presidency.

Fiorina also brings about the notion of collective responsibility. This term refers to the way in which people can act together to hold the government and our leaders accountable. However, this is increasingly difficult because as a single individual, it will be difficult to storm Washington offices and demand this or that from the government. However, political parties bring people together to act as one. Through political parties, citizens can raise issues they feel are not well addressed and then send the leaders of their political parties to petition the government on their behalf. A strong political party will therefore generate a sense of collective responsibility and create incentives for the leaders, followers, and the popular supporters to act in a collective manner.

According to Fiorina, there is systematic decline of collective responsibility in American politics. There has been declining influence of political parties that has been due to a number of changes that have been introduced into the system. Fiorina recognize that political party involvement that has been on the decline. Specifically, he points out to three main areas of electorate, in government, and organizations of these parties. Fiorina contends that one of the main reasons why there has been such a decline is changes in rules government political parties and the changing perception of political parties

as vehicles used by the rich to get to power rather than living to the ideals of the party.

This decline has had several effects on the political parties. First, it has eliminated the motivation of the elected member of the parties to clearly define broad policy objectives. This has led to diminishing of political participation from the members of the party and increase rise of alienation because most people fail to align with any political party. As had been highlighted earlier, one of the most important roles of political parties is to formulate policies that benefit the wider society. Being a representative of the people in a representative democracy means that the political party has to take up responsibility of acting on behalf of the people and articulate policies that benefits the their supporters. However, in the perceived decline of political parties, policies have been used to benefit only few individuals. Policies that are articulated by political parties are formulated in such a way they benefit the interest of few single-issue groups that mainly dominates politics through their money power rather than formulating policies that benefit the broad constituencies that are presented in the political parties.

Fiorina clearly states that there is an evidenced decline in collective responsibility in the United States. This emanates from the fact that there are no strong political parties that can provide electoral accountability. In reality, political parties have become puppets manipulated by the political elite and citizens have been left dancing to the tune they don't understand. In line with articulation of elite theories, political parties have become assets

for the few and they have failed in articulating the needs of majority of the population.

In his assessment of the conditions of the impact of decline in political parties in the country, Sunquist argues that one of the outcomes has been divided governments. Consequently it has become difficult for a divided government to make policies coherently and respond to the needs of the public because the issues of political parties are to obstruct and block rather than serving the public. Further Fiorina believe that the country is becoming more polarized on different issues like sexuality, morality, and religion, moving away from earlier issues of economics that dividend the government.

Assessing the view of these writers on the current political parties in the country, it is evident that there is need for drastic change in political parties. There is need to review the organization and role of political parties to enable them play major role in shaping public governance. Perhaps, Pomper approach could be a solution for the problem. America could be moving towards its own parliamentary democracy going by the current changes in political parties but this is only an assumption that may be far from reality.

Reference:

Sisk, T. & Korykov, I. (2005). *Representative democracy* . A Guide for South Caucasus