

existing in democracies; however, the influence of third-party candidates cannot be underestimated. Parliamentary democracies have multiparty systems.

Because the aim of a political party is to influence public policy, in order to succeed, parties must draw enough of the electorate into their organization and ultimately must get enough votes to elect candidates to public office. You can, therefore, look at a political party in three ways:

- as an organization,
- its relationship with the electorate, and
- its role in government.

In order to achieve their goals, all political parties have the following common functions:

- nominating candidates who can develop public policy,
- running successful campaigns,
- developing a positive image,
- raising money,
- articulating these issues during the campaign so that the electorate will identify with a particular party or candidate,
- coordinating, in the governing process, the implementation of the policies they supported, and
- maintaining a watchdog function if they do not succeed in electing their candidates.

The completion of each of these tasks depends on how effective the party's organization is, the extent the party establishes its relationship with the electorate, and how it controls the institutions of government. A complete discussion of these components and functions will take place in other parts of the chapter.

Party Eras

The First Party era (1828–1860) was characterized by the Democrats dominating the presidency and Congress. The Second period (1860–1932) could be viewed as the Republican era. The Third era (1932–1968) gave birth to the success of the New Deal and was dominated by the Democrats.

Party Realignment

Party realignment, the shift of party loyalty, occurred in 1932 after the country experienced the Great Depression. Fed up with the trickle-down economic theories of Herbert Hoover, the public turned to the New Deal policies of Franklin D. Roosevelt. A new coalition of voters supported FDR's New Deal. They included city dwellers, blue-collar workers, labor-union activists, the poor, Catholics, Jews, the South, and African Americans where they could vote. An unusual alliance of northern liberals and southern conservatives elected Roosevelt to an unprecedented four terms. This coalition, with the exception of Eisenhower's election, held control of the White House and Congress until 1968. A direct comparison can be made among Roosevelt's New Deal, Kennedy's New Frontier, and Johnson's Great Society philosophy and election coalition. The growth of the federal government and the growth of social programs became part of the Democratic platform. However, a party realignment began as Johnson fought for civil rights legislation. The Democratic "solid South" turned increasingly Republican, both on the state and national levels as southern white voters rejected the Democratic support for civil rights. In 1989, the so-called Reagan Democrats, blue-collar workers, signaled a new party realignment to the Republican Party. Reagan Democrats reemerged as a decisive factor in the 2016 election, many voting for Donald Trump, especially in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, three battleground states that he won.

Period of Divided Government

The ongoing Vietnam War and Nixon's promise to end the war brought the Republicans back to power in 1968. Since then, they have won seven of twelve presidential elections but were unable to control Congress until 1994. That is why this modern period has been called the period of divided government. The Watergate scandal and Nixon's resignation in 1974 saw a weakened GOP and the eventual loss by Gerald Ford to Jimmy Carter in 1976. That election signaled a new southern strategy, which Ronald Reagan was able to capitalize on in 1980. Pulling a constituency that has been labeled as "Reagan Democrats," Reagan attracted a traditional Democratic base of middle-class workers to his candidacy. Democrats became even more divided from 1981 to 1986 when the Republicans were able to control the Senate.

Third Parties

Third political parties, also called minor parties, have played a major role in influencing the outcome of elections and the political platforms of the Democrats and Republicans. Even though these smaller parties and their leaders realize that they have virtually no chance to win, they still wage a vocal campaign. These third parties can be described as ideological, single-issue oriented, economically motivated, and personality driven. They have been called Socialist, Libertarian, Right to Life, Populist, Bull Moose, and United We Stand. But they all have one thing in common—an effort to influence the outcome and direction of an election. Let us look at some of the more successful third-party attempts.

The modern third-party impact has revolved around a political leader who could not get the nomination from his party. George Wallace's American Independent Party of 1968 opposed the integration policies of the Democratic Party, and he received 13 percent of the vote and 46 electoral votes, contributing to Hubert Humphrey's defeat in a very close election. John Anderson's defection from the Republican Party in 1980 and his decision to run as a third-party candidate had a negligible effect on the outcome of that election.

The announcement by Texas billionaire H. Ross Perot that he was entering the 1992 presidential race, and using his own money to wage the campaign, changed the nature of that race. He announced his intention to run on CNN's *Larry King Show* and said that if his supporters could get his name on the ballot in all 50 states he would officially enter the race. A political novice, he decided to drop out of the race the day Bill Clinton was nominated by Democrats. He then reentered the heated contest in October, appeared in the presidential debates, and struck a chord with close to 20 percent of the electorate. His folksy style and call for reducing the nation's deficit played a significant role in the campaign. He did not win a single electoral vote, but won almost 20 percent of the popular vote. Ralph Nader running as the Green Party candidate hurt Al Gore's chance in the contested 2000 election. In 2016, third-party candidates won 5 percent of the popular vote.

Even though there has been a history of third-party movements, they do not succeed at the ballot box because there are built-in obstacles. Factors like winner-take-all voting districts act as an impediment to third-party candidates.

Party Dealignment

If party realignment signifies the shifts in the history of party eras, then people gradually moving away from their parties has become more of a trend in today's view of party loyalty. This shift to more neutral and ideological views of party identification has been termed "party dealignment." Party dealignment is also characterized by voters who are fed up with both parties and register

as independents. This trend has been on the rise and, in party-identification surveys, more than one-third of voters identify as independents. Those who are strong party loyalists believe the party matches their ideology. The shift of traditional Southern Democrats to the Republican Party came about because many voters perceived the Republicans as more conservative than the Democrats. Women activists, civil-rights supporters, and people who support abortion rights make up the Democratic coalition because the Democratic Party has supported these issues in their national platform. Party organization and party support have remained stronger than party identification because of the ability of the parties to raise funds and motivate their workers.

Optional Reading

A Comparison of the 2016 Democratic and Republican Party Platforms

Republican Platform	Key Issue	Democratic Platform
<p>“The Constitution’s guarantee that no one can ‘be deprived of life, liberty or property’ deliberately echoes the Declaration of Independence’s proclamation that ‘all’ are ‘endowed by their Creator’ with the inalienable right to life. Accordingly, we assert the sanctity of human life and affirm that the unborn child has a fundamental right to life which cannot be infringed. We support a human life amendment to the Constitution and legislation to make clear that the Fourteenth Amendment’s protections apply to children before birth.”</p>	Human Life	<p>“Democrats are committed to protecting and advancing reproductive health, rights, and justice. We believe unequivocally that every woman should have access to quality reproductive health care services, including safe and legal abortion—regardless of where she lives, how much money she makes, or how she is insured. We believe that reproductive health is core to women’s, men’s, and young people’s health and well being. . . . We will continue to oppose—and seek to overturn—federal and state laws and policies that impede a woman’s access to abortion, including by repealing the Hyde Amendment.”</p>
<p>“We oppose the use of public funds to perform or promote abortion or to fund organizations, like Planned Parenthood, so long as they provide or refer for elective abortions or sell fetal body parts rather than provide health care.”</p>	Planned Parenthood	<p>“We will continue to stand up to Republican efforts to defund Planned Parenthood health centers, which provide critical health services to millions of people.”</p>
<p>“We support the appointment of judges who respect traditional family values and the sanctity of innocent human life.”</p>	Judges	<p>“We will appoint judges who defend the constitutional principles of liberty and equality for all, protect a woman’s right to safe and legal abortion, curb billionaires’ influence over elections because they understand that Citizens United has fundamentally damaged our democracy, and see the Constitution as a blueprint for progress.”</p>

Republican Platform	Key Issue	Democratic Platform
<p>“We value the right of America’s religious leaders to preach, and Americans to speak freely, according to their faith. Republicans believe the federal government, specifically the IRS, is constitutionally prohibited from policing or censoring speech based on religious convictions or beliefs, and therefore we urge the repeal of the Johnson Amendment.”</p>	<p>Religious Liberty</p>	<p>“Democrats know that our nation, our communities, and our lives are made vastly stronger and richer by faith in many forms and the countless acts of justice, mercy, and tolerance it inspires. We believe in lifting up and valuing the good work of people of faith and religious organizations and finding ways to support that work where possible.”</p>
<p>“We firmly believe environmental problems are best solved by giving incentives for human ingenuity and the development of new technologies, not through top-down, command-and-control regulations that stifle economic growth and cost thousands of jobs.”</p>	<p>Climate Change/ Global Warming</p>	<p>“Climate change is an urgent threat and a defining challenge of our time. . . . We believe America must be running entirely on clean energy by mid-century.”</p>
<p>“We support options for learning, including home-schooling, career and technical education, private or parochial schools, magnet schools, charter schools, online learning, and early-college high schools. We especially support the innovative financing mechanisms that make options available to all children: education savings accounts (ESAs), tuition tax credits.”</p>	<p>Education/ School Choice</p>	<p>“Democrats are also committed to providing parents with high-quality public school options and expanding these options for low-income youth. We support great neighborhood public schools and high-quality public charter schools, and we will help them disseminate best practices to other school leaders and educators. Charter schools focus on making a profit off of public resources.”</p>
<p>“We renew our call for replacing ‘family planning’ programs for teens with sexual risk avoidance education that sets abstinence until marriage as the responsible and respected standard of behavior.”</p>	<p>Sex Education</p>	<p>“We recognize that quality, affordable comprehensive health care, evidence-based sex education, and a full range of family planning services help reduce the number of unintended pregnancies.”</p>
<p>“Any honest agenda for improving health care must start with repeal of the dishonestly named Affordable Care Act of 2010: Obamacare. . . . To simplify the system for both patients and providers, we will reduce mandates and enable insurers and providers of care to increase health care options and contain costs.”</p>	<p>Obamacare</p>	<p>“Thanks to the hard work of President Obama and Democrats in Congress we took a critically important step towards the goal of universal health care by passing the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which has offered coverage to 20 million more Americans and ensured millions more will never be denied pre-existing condition.”</p>

Republican Platform	Key Issue	Democratic Platform
<p>“We condemn the Supreme Court’s ruling in <i>United States v Windsor</i>, which wrongly removed the ability of Congress to define marriage policy in federal law. We also condemn the Supreme Court’s lawless ruling in <i>Obergefell v Hodges</i> . . . In <i>Obergefell</i>, five unelected lawyers robbed 320 million Americans of their legitimate constitutional define marriage as the union of one man and one woman.”</p>	<p>Marriage</p>	<p>“Democrats applaud last year’s decision by the Supreme Court that recognized LGBT people—like every other American—have the right to marry the person they love. But there is still much work to be done.”</p>
<p>“We call for expanded support for the stem cell research that now offers the greatest hope for many afflictions—through adult stem cells, umbilical cord blood, and cells reprogrammed into pluripotent stem cells—without the destruction of embryonic human life. We urge a ban on human cloning for research or reproduction, and a ban on the creation of, or mentation on, human embryos for research.”</p>	<p>Medical Research</p>	<p>“Democrats believe we must accelerate the pace of medical progress, ensuring that we invest more in our scientists and give them the resources they need to invigorate our fundamental studies in the life sciences in a growing, stable, and predictable way . . . funded National Institutes of Health to accelerate the pace of medical progress.”</p>
<p>“We consider the Administration’s deal with Iran, to lift international sanctions and make hundreds of billions of dollars available to the Mullahs, a personal agreement between the President and his negotiating partners and non-binding on the next president Because of it, the defiant and emboldened regime in Tehran continues to sponsor terrorisms the region, develop a nuclear weapon, test-fire ballistic missiles inscribed with ‘Death to Israel,’ and abuse the basic human rights of its citizens.”</p>	<p>Iran</p>	<p>“We support the nuclear agreement with Iran because, if vigorously enforced and implemented, it verifiably cuts off all of Iran’s pathways to a bomb without resorting to war.”</p>
<p>“The integrity of our country’s foreign assistance program has been compromised by the current Administration’s attempt to impose on foreign recipients, especially the peoples of Africa, its own radical social agenda while excluding faith-based groups—the sector with the best track record in promoting development—not conform to that agenda. We pledge to reverse this course”</p>	<p>Foreign Assistance</p>	<p>“We will support sexual and reproductive health and rights around the globe. In addition to expanding the availability of affordable family planning information and contraceptive supplies, we believe that safe abortion must be part of comprehensive maternal and women’s health care America’s global health programming.”</p>

HOW POLITICAL PARTIES ARE ORGANIZED

Political parties exist on both the national and local levels. Their organization is hierarchical. Grass-roots politics on the local level involves door-to-door campaigns to get signatures on petitions, campaigns run through precinct and ward organizations, county committees, and state committees headed by a state chairman. Local party bullies like William “Boss” Tweed or Democratic party machines like Tweed’s Tammany machine in nineteenth-century New York City or the Daley machine in twentieth-century Chicago have diminished in influence. The national political scene is dominated by the outcome of national conventions, which give direction to the national chairperson, the spokesperson of the party, and the person who heads the national committee. The party machine exists on the local level and uses patronage (rewarding loyal party members with jobs) as the means to keep party members in line.

The nominating process drives the organization of the national political party. This procedure has evolved and, even though the national nominating convention (more on this in the next chapter) still selects presidential candidates, the roles of the party caucus and party primary have grown in importance. The role of the national convention is one of publicizing the party’s position. It also adopts party rules and procedures. Sometimes this plays an important part in the restructuring of a political party. After the disastrous 1968 Democratic Convention, with antiwar rioting in the streets and calls for party reform, the McGovern–Frasier Commission brought significant representation changes to the party, making future conventions more democratic. Delegate-selection procedures aimed to include more minority representation. In 1982 another commission further reformed the representation of the Democratic Convention by establishing 15 percent of the delegates as “superdelegates” (technically uncommitted delegates chosen from party leaders and elected party officials). These delegates helped Walter Mondale achieve his nomination in 1984 and enabled Al Gore to defeat Bill Bradley easily in 2000. Superdelegates played a significant role in the 2008 Democratic primaries. Primary elections were completed in June, and neither Barack Obama nor Hillary Clinton had a majority of the delegates. Ultimately, the superdelegates turned to Obama, giving him a majority and enabling him to clinch the nomination. In 2016, there was criticism that these delegates have reduced the intent of the democratic reforms of the McGovern Commission.

The Republicans, on the other hand, were more concerned about regenerating party identification after the Watergate debacle. They were not interested in reform as much as making the Republican Party more efficient. Their conventions are well run and highly planned. There was, however, some negative publicity at their 1992 convention, which critics said was dominated by the conservative faction of the party. The lesson was learned. In 1996–2016, the Republican and Democratic Conventions were highly scripted.

The National Committee

The governing body of a political party is the national committee, made up of state and national party leaders. This committee has limited power and responds to the direction of the national chairperson. The chairperson is selected by the presidential candidates nominated at the convention. In fact, the real party leader of the party in power is the president himself. The chairperson is recognized as the chief strategist and often takes the credit or blame for gains or losses in midterm elections. Some of the primary duties of the national chairperson are fundraising, fostering party unity, recruiting new voters and candidates, and preparing strategy for the next election.

Also, congressional campaign committees in both parties work with their respective national committees to win Senate and House seats that are considered up for grabs.

The future of political parties depends on how closely associated the voters remain with the party. The future is not bright for traditional party politics. There has been a sharp decline in party enrollment and an increase in the affiliation of voters calling themselves independents. More and more ticket splitting (where voters cast ballots, not on party lines, but based upon each individual candidate running for a particular office) has taken place. The impact of the media on the campaign has weakened the ability of the party to get its message out. Finally, the impact of special-interest groups and PACs has reduced the need for elected officials to use traditional party resources.

Suggestions have been made to strengthen voter identification with the party by presenting

- clearly defined programs on how to govern the nation once their candidates are elected.
- candidates who are committed to the ideology of the party and are willing to carry out the program once elected.
- alternative views of the party out of power.

The winning party must take on the responsibility of governing the country if elected and accepting the consequences if it fails. This responsible party model would go a long way in redefining the importance of political parties in America. Even though there is a recognized decline in the importance of political parties, it is highly doubtful that our two-party system will change to a multiparty or ideological party system in the foreseeable future.

INTEREST GROUPS

Interest Groups as a Linkage to Public Policy

CONTEMPORARY CONNECTION

The National Rifle Association (NRA) has successfully lobbied against legislation that would reinstate the federal Assault Weapons Ban of 1994 and laws that would establish stricter background checks when buying guns. The NRA is also actively fighting for gun rights on the state level.

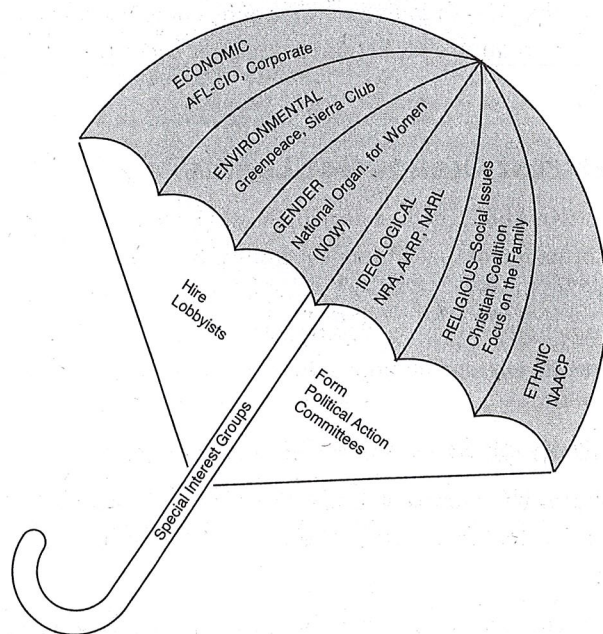


Characteristics of Special-Interest Groups

For the purposes of establishing a common understanding, the definition of an interest group is a linkage group that is a public or private organization, affiliation, or committee that has as its goal the dissemination of its membership's viewpoint. The result will be persuading public policy makers to respond to the group's perspective. The interest groups' goals are carried out by lobbyists and political action committees. They can take on an affiliation based on specialized memberships such as unions, associations, leagues, and committee and single-issue groups such as the National Rifle Association.

In trying to persuade elected officials to their position, these groups provide a great deal of specialized information to legislators. Group advocates also claim they provide an additional check and balance to the legislative system. Critics of the growth of specialized groups claim they are partly responsible for gridlock in government. In addition, critics point to how groups gain access to elected officials as a tradeoff for political contributions.

Once a specialized group is formed, it also has internal functions such as attracting and keeping a viable membership. Groups accomplish this by making promises to their membership that they will be able to succeed in their political goals, which in the end will benefit the political, economic, or social needs of the members. For example, if people want stricter laws against drunk driving and join Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), they feel a political and social sense of accomplishment when federal law dictates a national minimum drinking age along with federal aid to states for highway construction. For these groups to succeed, they also must have an adequate financial base to establish effective lobbying efforts or create separate political action committees. Dues may be charged or fundraisers might be held. The internal organization will certainly have elected officers responsible to their membership.



Group Theory

The nature of special-interest group membership is not representative of the population as a whole; consequently, the importance of group theory will help explain the context in which these groups develop. It is interesting to note that many have as their members people with higher than average income and education levels and many who are white-collar workers. However, this is balanced by the number of groups that have proliferated and represent the interests of union members and blue-collar workers. A problem interest groups face is the "free rider," where members of a special interest group join without contributing to it with money or time.

Optional Reading

The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups (1965),
by Mancur Olson

From the publisher:

"This book develops an original theory of group and organizational behavior that cuts across disciplinary lines and illustrates the theory with empirical and historical studies of particular organizations. Applying economic analysis to the subjects of the political scientist, sociologist, and economist, Mancur Olson examines the extent to which the