

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



Chapter 17 Political Parties

Lesson 1 Development of Political Parties

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How does the two-party system influence American democracy?

Reading HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

stability remaining steady

range the extent of options

Content Vocabulary

political party a group of individuals with broad common interests who organize to nominate candidates for office, win elections, conduct government, and determine public policy

patronage the practice of granting favors to reward party loyalty

one-party system a system in which only one political party exists, often because the government tolerates no other opposition; usually in authoritarian governments

two-party system a system in which two major parties compete for power, although minor parties may exist

coalition government one formed by several parties who combine forces to obtain a majority

third party any political party other than one of the two major parties

single-issue party a political party which focuses exclusively on one major social, economic, or moral issue

ideological party a political party that has a particular set of ideas about how to change society overall rather than focusing on a single issue

splinter party a political party that splits away from a major party because of some disagreement

single-member district an electoral district in which only one candidate is elected to each office

proportional representation a system in which several officials are elected to represent the same area in proportion to the votes each party's candidate receives

TAKING NOTES: *Integrating Knowledge and Ideas*

LISTING Use the graphic organizer to list the functions of political parties and party systems.

Functions of Political Parties	Functions of Party Systems

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

The logo for 'networks' features the word in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. A stylized network of lines radiates from the letter 'o', extending across the top and right sides of the page.

Chapter 17 Political Parties

Lesson 1 Development of Political Parties, *continued*

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How does the two-party system influence American democracy?

Think about your favorite team sport and what it takes to win a national or world championship. What things are most important to winning? Work with one other student to rank each of the following factors from most to least important.

- ___ Recruiting the most talented players
- ___ Having the best strategies on the field or court
- ___ Having the hardest-working athletes
- ___ Having the most inspiring coaches
- ___ Having the best feeder team (like a minor league baseball team)
- ___ Having the most money to advertise game day information to fans and potential fans
- ___ Having the best scouts to discover the other teams' strategies and weaknesses
- ___ Having the most loyal fans

Functions of Political Parties

Guiding Question *What functions do political parties serve in government?*

A **political party** is a group of people with broad common interests who organize to win elections and control government. Their goal is to influence government policies. Parties need some of the same things as a winning sports team in order to get their candidates elected. For example, parties need hard-working candidates just like sports teams need hard-working players. Parties also need money to spread information about their positions on issues. Finally, both sports teams and political parties need lots of fans.

The most successful political parties win on Election Day when more of their “fans” go to the polls. However, after party candidates win elections their work has just begun. The elected candidates then have to govern. They often have to work with members of the opposing political party. Elected candidates must work to implement the policies they campaigned for. They must also prepare for the next election.

The Constitution does not create political parties or even mention them. However, political parties are an essential part of the American democratic system. Political parties perform several important functions that no other institution in American politics does.

Electing Candidates

Political parties recruit men and women to run for office who seem to have a good chance of being elected. Parties raise money for campaigns. The parties organize rallies and meetings to create enthusiasm for their candidates. They also manage “Get Out The Vote” events to remind their supporters to vote on Election Day. They might even offer transportation services to make sure loyal supporters can get to the polls.

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

The logo for 'networks' features the word 'networks' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized graphic consisting of several thin, intersecting lines that form a starburst or web-like pattern.

Chapter 17 Political Parties

Lesson 1 Development of Political Parties, *continued*

Educating the Public

Political parties bring important issues to the public's attention. Each party publishes its position on important issues such as inflation, military spending, taxes, pollution, energy, and the environment. Candidates present these views in pamphlets, press conferences, and speeches. Candidates also present their views in television, radio, newspaper, and online advertisements. Candidates in the 2012 election used information such as supporters' Facebook likes, location, and photos to make their advertising more specific and successful. Candidates also have their own websites, social network pages, and Twitter feeds. They use these to present information about their views to the public and to interact with their supporters.

Unfortunately, many Americans are not well-informed about the background of candidates or their views on important issues. Political parties simplify elections by helping those people decide how to vote. A voter can support a candidate just because he or she is a Democrat or a Republican. This is because the voter knows generally how the candidate stands on key issues due to which party they represent. In this way, political party affiliation helps voters decide which candidate is more acceptable.

Involving People in the Political Process

Political parties provide numerous opportunities for people to affect government. This is true even of people who are not interested in getting elected themselves. Local political parties allow people to become involved in campaigns by helping to register other voters, putting up signs, or donating money. Political parties need people to serve as election judges and poll-watchers on Election Day. Political parties need people to do this to make sure that all election laws are followed. Political parties set their goals by listening to what people say they want from their government.

Operating the Government

Political parties also play a key role in running and staffing the executive and legislative branches of government. Congress and the state legislatures are organized and carry on their work on the basis of party affiliation. Party leaders in the legislatures work to make sure that their members support the party's position when considering legislation.

A party also acts as a link between a legislature and a chief executive. A chief executive works through his or her party leaders in the legislature to make people aware of the administration's program. However, one party has controlled the White House and the other party has controlled one or both houses of Congress for most of the past 30 years. This situation is known as *divided government*. The same situation has recently developed between governors and legislatures in more than half the states.

Dispensing Patronage

Political parties also give out **patronage** to their members. Patronage is giving out rewards for party loyalty. These rewards often include jobs, contracts, and appointments to government positions. For example, business executives or labor unions will contribute heavily to a political party. They may then expect government to pay more attention to their problems if that party comes to power. Those businesses or unions might be awarded contracts to provide government with goods or services. Loyal party workers might be placed in government jobs. Laws and court decisions have limited patronage in recent years. However, the practice remains a major way for parties to control and reward their supporters.

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



Chapter 17 Political Parties

Lesson 1 Development of Political Parties, *continued*

Patronage may be improper if inexperienced people get key jobs as a reward just because they donated a lot of money to a winning candidate. However, patronage does allow the party in power to have at least some people in government who are very loyal to the party. This allows the party to carry out its goals for public policy.

Developing and Implementing Policy

A political party works to implement its key policy initiatives after it wins an election. Elected officials and party leaders set goals for government action. Then they explain those goals to the American people. They work through the legislatures to pass laws to deal with important issues. They work through the executive branch to implement government programs in line with their beliefs and priorities.

Government Watchdog

The party that is out of power in the legislative or executive branch has the job of being a “watchdog” over the government. It observes the party that is in power, criticizes it, and offers solutions to political problems. Public opinion might change to favor the opposition if the opposition party does this successfully. A change in public opinion could return the opposition party to power in a future election. Concern about losing public support makes the party in power pay more attention to the wishes of the people.

Providing Stability

Parties contribute to political **stability**, or remaining steady. In the United States, the transfer of power from one party to another takes place peacefully. No violent revolutions happen after elections, as they do in some nations. The losing party accepts the outcome of elections. It knows that the party will continue to exist as the opposing party and someday will return to power.



Reading Progress Check

Explaining How do political parties help educate the public about major issues? How do they assist in the operation of the government?

Party Systems

Guiding Question *How does the two-party system in the United States compare to other party systems?*

The United States has two major parties. This is not true in all other countries. Most nations have one or more political parties. The number of parties and their role is different in each nation’s political system.

One-Party Systems

One-party systems are usually found in nations with authoritarian governments. Only one political party exists. This is often because the government does not allow any opposition. The party is the

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



Chapter 17 Political Parties

Lesson 1 Development of Political Parties, *continued*

government in these nations. The party leaders run the government and set all policy. Such governments are formed when political parties or the military take power by force. Today Cuba, Vietnam, North Korea, and China are all one-party Communist governments.

Some nations function as one-party states even if there is more than one party. This is the case where the government might allow other parties to participate, but those parties have no likely chance of winning. Russia experimented for a short time in the mid-1990s with democratic elections. However, Russia today has created an authoritarian system. No political parties are able to effectively compete against Vladimir Putin's United Russia Party.

Two-party and Multi-party Systems

Only about a dozen nations have systems in which two major political parties compete for power, although minor parties exist. These systems are known as **two-party systems**. The United States has a two-party system.

The multi-party system is far more common among political systems today. For example, France and Italy each have more than 15 political parties that can influence the government. Between five to seven of those parties typically have a significant number of seats in the parliament. Voters in countries with multi-party systems have a wide **range**, or the extent of options, of choices on Election Day. These systems are more common in countries with parliamentary governments.

Multi-party systems do not allow for as much opposition as it may appear in some cases. For example, in Iran, many parties exist, but religious conservatives control the country. This makes it difficult for reformist opposition parties to participate in government.

Some other multi-party systems operate basically as a one-party system. Many parties may compete in elections, but one party tends to win election after election. That party often wins by huge majorities. Nigeria is an example. Nigeria gained its independence in 1960. Since then, Nigeria has had both periods of democracy and periods of military rule. Its present democracy has been in place since 1999. Nigeria currently has nearly 30 political parties. However, every president since 1999 has been a member of the People's Democratic Party (PDP). Of the 469 members of the National Assembly, 345 are members of the PDP. The PDP can make whatever policies it wants because of this power.

One party rarely gets enough support to control the government in a multi-party system. Elected officials from several parties often work together to obtain a majority and form a **coalition government**. Disputes sometimes arise when groups with different ideologies share power. Those coalitions often break down as a result. Sometimes, the coalition is not able to govern effectively. New elections may be called when the existing coalition is unable to govern.



Reading Progress Check

Contrasting How do one-party and two-party systems differ?

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



Chapter 17 Political Parties

Lesson 1 Development of Political Parties, *continued*

Evolution of American Parties

Guiding Question *How has the American two-party system evolved?*

Many of the Founders distrusted factions, or groups with differing political views. President George Washington warned against the harmful effects of political parties in his Farewell Address of 1796. However, two political parties had organized in opposition to one another by the end of President Washington’s second term. The parties changed over time, with some parties falling apart and others being created. Sometimes there were several major political parties in the United States. However, two strong parties developed after the Civil War. Those two parties were the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. They remain the dominant parties today.

Parties Before the Civil War

In the late 1700s, the two original parties were the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans. The Federalists wanted a strong central government. The Democratic-Republicans believed that the states should have more power. Federalist John Adams became president in 1796. The party’s power quickly declined after that. The Democratic-Republicans dominated politics into the 1820s. Conflicts over banking, tariffs, and slavery later destroyed the party. By 1828 the Democratic-Republicans were separating into two parties. Then-president Andrew Jackson sided with the group called Democrats. The other group called itself the National Republicans, or the Whigs.

By the 1850s, the debate over slavery had created divisions within both parties and created new parties. That is when the Free Soil and Know-Nothing parties were created. The Democrats split into Northern and Southern groups. Many Whigs joined a new party that opposed the spread of slavery. That new party was called the Republican Party.

Parties After the Civil War

Two major parties dominated the national political scene by the end of the Civil War. The Republicans generally represented the northern states. Republicans controlled the presidency and both houses of Congress. The Democrats were usually from the southern states. Democrats held the presidency for only four terms between 1860 and 1932. In 1932 the Democratic Party won the White House and took control of Congress. Democrats were the majority party for most of the next 60 years. A variety of minor parties existed throughout these years, but none took over the role of the two major parties. Since 1968, these two parties have often split control of the presidency and Congress.



Reading Progress Check

Summarizing What were American political parties like before and after the Civil War?

Reading Essentials and Study Guide

The logo for 'networks' features the word 'networks' in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a stylized graphic consisting of several thin, intersecting lines that form a starburst or web-like pattern.

Chapter 17 Political Parties

Lesson 1 Development of Political Parties, *continued*

Minor or Third Parties

Guiding Question *What role do third parties, or minor parties, play in the United States government?*

Third parties have been part of the American political scene since the early days of the Republic. A **third party** is any party other than one of the two major parties. More than one party may run against the major parties in any election. However, each of those parties is labeled a “third” party. Third parties are also called minor parties because they rarely win elections.

Third parties have a variety of ideologies and goals, but they do have one thing in common. They believe that neither major party is meeting certain needs. A third party offers candidates who propose ways to fix this situation.

Types of Third Parties

Minor parties generally fall into one of three categories. **Single-issue parties** focus exclusively on one major social, economic, or moral issue. For example, in the 1840s the Liberty Party and the Free Soil Party formed to take stronger stands against slavery than either dominant party had taken. In 2006, the United States Pirate Party was formed and focused on electing candidates who will reform copyright and patent laws. The United States Pirate Party wants to make it possible to legally share online movies, art, and computer source codes. They believe this is better for creative professionals and for democracy.

Single-issue parties are usually short-lived. They may slowly disappear when an issue is no longer important. They may also become irrelevant if one of the major parties adopts the issue.

Another type of third party is the **ideological party**. An ideological party has a particular set of ideas about how to change society rather than focusing on a single issue. Ideological parties such as the Socialist Labor Party and the Communist Party USA support government ownership of factories, transportation, resources, farmland, and other means of production and distribution. The Libertarian Party calls for large reductions in the size and scope of government in order to increase personal freedoms.

The third type of minor party is the **splinter party**. The splinter party separates from one of the major parties because of some disagreement. An example might be the failure of a popular person to gain the major party’s presidential nomination. Splinter parties typically decline and disappear after the defeat of their candidate.

One example of this happened in 1912. Former president Theodore Roosevelt led a group out of the Republican Party to form the Progressive Party. The Progressive Party was also known as the Bull Moose Party. The party disappeared after Roosevelt lost the election. Another example happened in 1948 when the Democratic Party supported an end to segregation. Presidential candidate Strom Thurmond formed his own “States Rights Democratic Party” in response. His party was also known as the “Dixiecrats.” This short-lived party disappeared after the 1948 election, in which Thurmond won only four states.

The Impact of Third Parties

Minor parties have influenced the outcome of national elections. Theodore Roosevelt’s Bull Moose Party took so many Republican votes from President William Howard Taft in 1912 that Democratic candidate Woodrow Wilson was elected. In 1968 the American Independent Party won 13.5 percent of the vote. Some people think this helped the Republican candidate Richard Nixon win the election.

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



Chapter 17 Political Parties

Lesson 1 Development of Political Parties, *continued*

In 2000 Green Party candidate Ralph Nader earned more than two million votes. Some analysts believe he took votes from Democrat Al Gore, allowing Republican George W. Bush to win.

Perhaps the most successful third-party candidate in a presidential election was Ross Perot. Ross Perot was a member of the Reform Party. He won 19 percent of the popular vote in 1992. Perot’s influence was significant, even though Bill Clinton won the election. Perot brought voters’ attention to urgent problems caused by the federal budget deficit. Clinton was forced to deal with the deficit because it was clear voters expected him to.

Third parties often influence politics by suggesting new ideas. If those ideas get the people’s support, the major parties adopt them. For example, Socialists were the first to popularize the woman suffrage movement in the late 1800s. The Socialists and the Populist Party were the first to propose laws against child labor. They also proposed the 40-hour workweek in the early 1900s. The Democrats later adopted these issues.

Obstacles for Third Parties

Minor parties face difficulties in getting on the ballot in all 50 states as a result of the two-party tradition. The names of Republicans and Democrats are automatically on the ballot in many states. However, third-party candidates must get a large number of voter signatures in a short time in order to be added to the ballot.

Another difficulty for third-party candidates is that nearly all elected officials in the United States are selected by **single-member districts**. Under this system only one candidate will win. It does not matter how many candidates compete in a district. The winner has almost always been a Democrat or a Republican because most voters support a major party. This is not the system in all nations. Many nations use an election system based on **proportional representation**. In this system, several officials are elected to represent voters in an area. Offices are filled in proportion to the votes that each party’s candidates receive. Such a system encourages minority parties.

Third parties often have problems paying for campaigns. Candidates from the major political parties can choose to get government funding to help pay for their campaigns. However, the rules state that government funding is available only to political parties that received a certain percentage of votes in the previous election. Most third parties have not qualified for public financing because of these rules. Also, third-party candidates usually get less media attention. This limits their fundraising and their ability to convince voters to choose them. Another problem is that voters may prefer a third-party candidate but may not believe a third-party candidate can win. As a result, voters are less likely to contribute to their campaigns or vote for them.



Reading Progress Check

Explaining Explain the differences between single-issue, ideological, and splinter parties. Which tend to be short-lived and why?
