The Consequences of Party Reform in the 21st Century

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The U.S. Constitution makes no mention of political parties nor does the U.S. Constitution identify a mechanism for nominating candidates. Congress nominated the president and vice-president until 1828. Since 1832, presidential and vice-presidential candidates have been nominated by party conventions.
## Consequences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nomination by Congress</th>
<th>Nomination by Party Convention</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is a greater likelihood that Congress will select candidates with whom they believe that they will work well.</td>
<td>Congress members, in the role of unpledged (super) delegates (since 1984) play a role in nominating the candidates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The president’s administration may run more smoothly as the president is elected with supporters in Congress.</td>
<td>The president is nominated separately from Congress (both as to nomination and election) which may contribute to a difficult relationship between the president and Congress.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Election of 1968

“I shall not seek, and I will not accept, the nomination of my party for another term as your President.”

March 31, 1968, Address to the Nation
Well, I don't know what will happen now. We've got some difficult days ahead. But it really doesn't matter with me now, because I've been to the mountaintop. And I don't mind.

Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now.

(April 3, 1968)
The Assassination of Robert Kennedy
June 5, 1968
The Nomination of Hubert Humphrey

Vice-President Hubert Humphrey did not run in a single primary or caucus.
The 1968 Election Result
Why Party Reform?

The nation was bitterly divided in 1968

King and Kennedy assassinations
Vietnam Conflict
Lyndon Johnson Withdrawal
Richard Nixon Win
Party Reform

The reforms that were developed from the McGovern-Fraser Commission emphasized that the nominations process should be “open, timely, and representative” (Maisel 1999, 268)

How are these goals achieved?

Nomination process is open to more rank-and-file party members
Easier to secure delegate support at nominating conventions
More women and minorities, including youth, to be included as delegates

Nomination contests now include more primaries than caucuses
No primary or caucus takes place before January 1
# Party Nomination Changes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominations 1832-1968</th>
<th>Nominations since 1972</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Party leader directed system</td>
<td>Individual directed system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucuses used more than primaries at the state level</td>
<td>Primaries used more than caucuses at the state level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party leaders selected the vice-presidential candidate</td>
<td>Presidential candidate selects the vice-presidential candidate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party-centric nominating convention</td>
<td>Presidential candidate-centered convention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The 2016 Presidential Nomination Season
The 2016 Nomination Season

First primary: February 9
Last primary: June 14
First caucus: February 1
Last caucus: June 7
Trump secured the nomination on May 24
Clinton secured the nomination on June 7
## Delegate Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Democratic Delegates</th>
<th>Republican Delegates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent Female</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent African-American</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Under 30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Age</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Protestant</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Catholic</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Jewish</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are the Consequences for Party Reform in the 21st Century?

Candidate centered campaigns render party rules less impactful. The convention itself has become far less meaningful:

The presidential nominee is selected more by the rank-and-file and less by the party elite.

The vice-presidential nominee is chosen by the presumptive nominee.

The platform is less directive and more reflective.
More Consequences

Party reform clarified the importance of openness, timeliness and representativeness.

These expectations are now part of the public’s political ethos.

Efforts to restrict participation based on race, gender or age, which were factors in 1968, matter far less due to changes in the public consciousness and public policies protecting voting rights and voter access.
THANK YOU SO MUCH!