

A. How important is the invisible primary in the presidential election campaign?

The invisible primary is the period in between where candidates first announce their intentions to stand for presidency and when the first primary ballots are cast. The invisible primary generally consists of heavy fund raising (in excess of \$100 million) as well as opinion polls, used by the media, to gauge who the front runners for the election are. Generally speaking, those who are able to raise the most money are going to appear as the strongest candidates and as a result, will be able to command greater donation power from those who are reserved until they have a clearer idea of who may win.

The creation of informal and semi formal networks is crucial. Democrat, Hillary Clinton didn't announce her 2008 presidential intentions until after the 2006 mid-term elections, but her team had already begun to build a national fundraising committee to rival the Democratic National Committee, which was perceived to be unpredictable. The front loading of the primaries and caucuses means that candidates need to build up a significant amount of capital during the invisible primary 'process'. Front loading has rendered it very difficult to raise capital once the actual primaries commence. In 1996 and 2000, Pat Buchanan and John McCain couldn't defeat the financial strength of Dole and Bush, despite winning in New Hampshire.

Due to the fluctuation in the polls, the media really do play a significant roll in the momentum that the candidates have as they enter the real primaries. The value of polls though, is limited. In September of 2005, pollsters asked both Republicans and Democrats who might seek the presidency in 2008. Giuliani, Rice and McCain all polled over 20% for the Republicans, and for the Democrats, Clinton received over 40%, whereas her main rivals, Edwards, Gore and Kerry achieved only between 10 and 15%.

The invisibly primary can be used as a platform for candidates to give their name's recognition, funds and momentum. This is well

The role of the primary is to, in theory; make the process of selecting party candidates, more democratic, but in reality, the real primaries is now merely to confirm the winner of the invisible primaries. The invisible primary is now no longer invisible and in reality, has extended the start of the presidential election to instantly after the mid-terms.

B. The advantages of primary elections vastly outweigh their disadvantages in the selection of each party's presidential nominee. Discuss.

The main function of the primary elections is to empower the party members, in the process of selecting a presidential candidate to serve office. The elections though, may be discredited by people due to the perceived discourse it has taken, with front loading etc. However, despite this, the primaries serve as an excellent opportunity for general scrutiny and examination of the presidential candidates to take place, for the party to decide who they support for the role, and also so that the public can make their decisions, as the order of proceedings as portrayed to them via the media.

Michigan, Missouri and Mississippi, both the Republicans and Democrats allow any citizen of the state to vote, irrespective of their political affiliation, and so, achieving 'grass roots democracy'. This large scale participation has been seen to achieve a quasi-pure democracy since 1972 with the eradication of party hierarchical selection. The USA has always had a low level of voter turnout for general presidential elections. But, as exemplified with the Democrat primaries in the Clinton vs. Obama, younger voters in greater numbers are partaking in the political process. In New Hampshire (D), turnout accelerated to 52.5%. The primaries are there to give the 'backbenchers' in the party, the opportunity to make their opinion known in the process of selecting a presidential candidate.

Since the wide scale development of the 24/7 media culture, the candidates in the primaries receive their share of public scrutiny, with the free media giving their view on the proceedings. Internal party debates are of paramount importance, and indeed, Obama was allowed, through the debates of the 2008 campaign, to rise ahead of Clinton. This draws parallels with the 2004 presidential campaign, where Kerry was seen to be the "most elect able" candidate. As a result, he was chosen, owing to the high likelihood of success that was attached to him.

A fundamental flaw of this system is, however, the fact that the parties have the potential to emerge from the nominations with internal division, is personal feuds develop amongst the supporters. This was evident in 2008, where Clinton and Obama were locked in battle which was to remain so for the vast majority of the campaign. This has been an issue for campaigns of the past, also. Ford lost the presidency in 1976 owing to a long, and damaging internal party battle with Carter over the presidency.

The primary elections can also be seen to interfere with day-to-day politics in Washington, owing to the so called "electioneering", that they are more or less compelled to follow. As previously stated, the candidates more or less start the process after the mid terms occur, (such as in November 2010), consisting of a wide scale income generating campaign (invisible primaries, or money primaries). This is two years before the general presidential election. The current president would usually seek to serve another term (assuming he can do so), and indeed, Obama has given speeches before the Democrats already regarding the economic mismanagement of the Republican Party, under Bush. This also has personal motives, rather than interests for the party.

A more crucial factor has been front-loading, severely undermining the primary process. The 2008 election had a total of thirty four states holding their primaries on or before Super Tuesday. This may be perceived as being harmful to the general public, as the time span in which they have to gauge the candidates has been severely diminished, resulting in a wave of support for the most 'popular' public figure, such as Obama in 2008. This is less favourable for the lesser known candidates, who lack the support base and resources of the more prominent candidates. The political calendar in the US is becoming more limited and the time frames are becoming more intense.

To conclude, the disadvantages of the primaries far outweigh the benefits that they bring to American politics. They are just plainly ludicrous; there is massive apathy

towards voting in the USA, and even in the more significant elections such as the Iowa caucus, there is a mere 6%. Even British local government elections poll more with turnout at about 35% on average. There is also the completely ignored factor that people from the Republicans may turn out and vote for the weakest Democratic candidate and vice versa. Front loading is also a very crucial factor as to why the primary elections are essentially, a complete shamble. Minor candidates are able to get ahead of the 'big wigs' and a complete lack of investigation, scrutiny and examination for such a significant public roll all contribute to the weakness of the primaries as a democratic electoral process in American politics. It is quite likely that the electoral process in Mugabe's Zimbabwe is more meaningful. The primaries are not democratic, and the process does not yield balanced and meaningful results.