

## Winning the US Presidential Nominations: The 2016 Presidential Primaries and Its Implication on Democracy

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper takes a look at the presidential primaries in the US, by providing the background and the different methods adopted by states in conducting the primaries. It has proceeded to highlight the importance of voter mobilization and the factors that play in voters' mobilization for a candidate to win in the primaries. Subsequently, it answers the question; what accounted for the success of Trump and Clinton in the presidential primaries of 2016? This question has been answered based on two hypotheses around the candidate's background and financial resources vis-à-vis success in primaries. It has employed both qualitative and quantitative data presented in tables and charts on the candidate's background, finances, and spending. Further, it has discussed the background in light of the candidate's familiarity with the voters' and the interaction with finances both in terms of the amount the candidates were able to raise from different sources, the timing of the spending, and value obtained from the expenditures. While giving implications on democracy and the low voter turnout that characterized this election, the paper has concluded that Trump's victory was majorly media-driven whereas, Clinton's victory drew much impetus from the party elites.*

### INTRODUCTION

The presidential nominations have been in the past done through the party elites who chose the party's presidential nominee. However, since the 1972 elections, this pattern has changed since party primaries became open for participation both by party elites and ordinary party members who were given more room in choosing the party nominee. This followed the McGovern-Fraser reforms on presidential nomination which was instituted by the Democratic Party and passed in 1972. This method was also adopted by the Republican Party hence making the two parties permit their grassroots members to participate in the primaries in choosing the party's presidential nominee. This role has an implication on democracy and the representativeness of the electorates in general. The reforms disallowed the procedures which were not open to party members at different levels and endorsed the use of party primary and open caucus in the selection of the delegates leading to an unexpected increase in the number of state primaries. The use of elite state conventions has therefore been effectively replaced by the primaries which are accounting for the selection of more than 80 percent of the delegates by Republicans and Democrats.<sup>1</sup>

The primaries have therefore played a key role in nominating candidates to the highest office. However, scholars have concerned themselves with the representativeness of the candidates that come to power through the primaries.<sup>2</sup> The low voter turnout in the primaries which has been observed to be averaging 25% for both Democrats and Republicans have even further put to question the efficacy of primaries in promoting democracy and representativeness.<sup>3</sup> It has been lamented that the small number of participants

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<sup>1</sup> Gimpel, James G., Hoffman, Adam H. & Kaufmann, Karen M. (2003). A Promise Fulfilled? Open Primaries and Representation, *The Journal of Politics*, 65 (2). Pp. 457–476.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Lau, Richard R. (2013). Correct Voting in the 2008 U.S. Presidential Nominating Elections, *Political Behavior*, 35 (2). Pp. 331–355.

in the nomination of the candidates may affect the ability of the party's candidate to ascend into the office as well as bring into the office an individual with improbable character.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the candidates that get nominations through the primaries have also raised questions on the part of the parties and their operatives who have lamented the extreme ideological orientation of the candidate nominees who are less likely to attract moderate voters in the general elections.<sup>5</sup> These issues cloud the efficacy of primaries in promoting democratic values and representativeness.

Nonetheless, there has not only been a rise in the number of primaries but the methods through which they are conducted. Three different methods of conducting primaries have been identified as open primaries allowing all registered voters to participate irrespective of their party affiliation. The second method is what is called the modified-open primaries conducted in some states where party members, some independents, and unaffiliated voters are allowed to vote and finally, the closed method where only party members vote.<sup>6</sup> The impact of the reform has been probed with regard to its ability to influence the election of moderate candidates. This has brought into question the ability of the expanded eligibility to 'mobilize different kinds of voters with discernably different preferences'.<sup>7</sup> This, therefore, introduces the concept of voter mobilization besides the voting procedures as a variable that inform the number and the kind of voters that take part in voting at the primaries. It has been observed that, since primaries are more of intraparty matters, there exists a general harmony in ideology.<sup>8</sup> However, it has been opined that differences dwell in the policy choices of the individual candidates.<sup>9</sup> This nevertheless, holds little prominence in voters' mobilization for the primaries within the party.

Other scholars have therefore suggested that 'timing and competitiveness' of the primaries in question has always determined both the number and kind of voters that are mobilized.<sup>10</sup> Larry M. Bartels (1988) has expounded on this point by positing that primaries that are conducted early are very important pointers to the other coming primaries since they attracted much media attention as well as spending and visits by the candidates with the expected effect of higher voter turnout.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, the party elites have been empirically demonstrated to be highly influential in determining the outcome of party primaries with the ability to manipulate rules in their favor from 1976.<sup>12</sup>

This observation is closer to the arguments offered by Weber who while writing on his model of democracy, observed that the mass franchise has brought party politics at the center of political engagements, and the parties instead of enhancing the control by the masses have only led to career politicians.<sup>13</sup> He has added that this results from the need to mobilize voters whose interests are divergent hence ushering in a form of competition of social forces attempting to sway the voters which involve

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<sup>4</sup> Key, Vladimir O. (1956). *American State Politics: An Introduction*. New York: Knopf.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Hedlund, Ronald D. (1978). Cross-over Voting in a 1976 Open Presidential Primary, *Public Opinion Quarterly* 41 (4). Pp. 498–515.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Bartels, Larry M. (1988). *Presidential Primaries and the Dynamics of Public Choice*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Held, David (2006). "Competitive Elitism and the Technocratic Vision". In: *Models of Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

resources. The mobilization of such resources to win influence over voters' leads to dependence of the party on individuals charged with the management of party affairs.<sup>14</sup>

Stemming from the above is the idea of the construction of the general will embodying the sovereignty of the people for the political parties to gain influence over voters' in their mobilization. This may not be much applicable at the primaries especially in those states where there is a closed method of voting where only party members vote for their preferred candidates based on policies. Further, the short duration of conducting campaigns as well as voters' unfamiliarity with the candidates complicates the voters' mobilization during the primaries. This is pegged on the fact that humans are 'cognitively limited information processors'.<sup>15</sup> This makes people arrive at less optimal decisions when faced with huge volumes of information given the imperfect condition under which the voters' in the presidential primaries have to make decisions.<sup>16</sup> According to Richard R. Lau (2013) the US presidential elections spanning from 1972 to 2008, 76 percent of voters' have reported having voted for the right candidates with whom their values and preferences align. However, he has pointed out that the way 'politicians get nominated by their political parties' as candidates has not been explored.<sup>17</sup> It is from this observation that this paper seeks to answer the question; what accounted for the success of Trump and Clinton in the presidential primaries of 2016?

In answering this question the paper contributes to knowledge on what factors are critical for candidates as they mobilize voters' to rally behind them before they can finally win the primaries and the implications of such factors on democracy. Subsequently, this paper has adopted two hypotheses. First, the more familiar voters' are with the candidate, the more they are likely to vote him or reject him. Thus, the candidates must reach out to voters' to not only introduce themselves but also their policies. Secondly, the more money a candidate raises, the higher the chances of winning the nominations. Money is addressed in three different perspectives looking at the amount raised, the sources of the money, and finally the strategic spending of the money. The argument is that money influences campaigns and holds the potential to sway voters in favor of a particular candidate based on the background of the candidate in question. The source of money is equally critical since it tells about the segment of the society from which the candidate draws support. The focus is, therefore, on the 2016 presidential primaries conducted by Republicans and Democrats with interest in how the top candidates' performed that led to the victories of Trump and Clinton.

## METHOD AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A mixed-method of data collection involving both quantitative and qualitative data has been employed. The sources of data included the American Presidency Project<sup>18</sup> which provided data on presidential nominations and elections. This source of data proved valuable in providing detailed information about the presidential candidates which included their background and familiarity with voters. However, this source of data did not provide campaign financial information that this paper needed to establish the

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<sup>14</sup> Giddens, Anthony (1972). *"The Sociological Framework of Weber's Political Thought"*. In: *Politics and Sociology in the Thought of Max Weber*. London: Palgrave.

<sup>15</sup> Lau, Richard R. (2013). *Correct Voting in the 2008 U.S. Presidential Nominating Elections*, *Political Behavior*, 35 (2). Pp. 331–355.

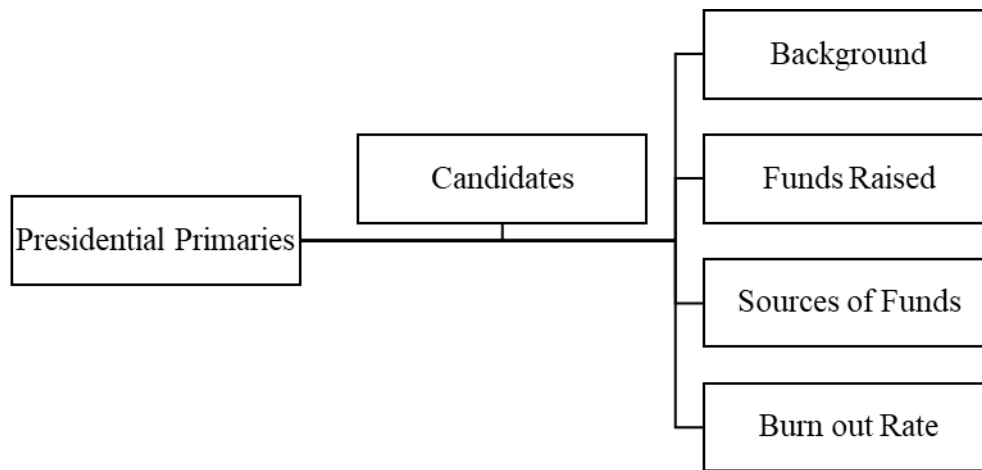
<sup>16</sup> Fiske, Susan T. & Taylor, Shelley E. (1991). *Social Cognition*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>18</sup> *Interesting Convention Facts: Some "Firsts" and Interesting Facts at Presidential Nominating Conventions and Presidential Elections*. Available at <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/presidential-documents-archive-guidebook/interesting-convention-facts>. Accessed on 10 October 2019.

relationship between the candidates’ performance in the primaries vis-a-vis the financial resources at their disposal. Subsequently, additional data has been obtained from the US Federal Election Commission, news reports, and compilation of the related information by the New York Times<sup>19</sup>. The data from these sources have provided valuable insights into the amount of money that was raised by each candidate and the different methods through which the money was raised and the rate at which it was spent. This is vital in gauging the performance of the candidates with regard to voters’ mobilization for the primaries. The conceptual framework through which the data has been analyzed is presented in Figure (1) below.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



### REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES, RACE PROGRESSION, AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES MOBILIZED

The availability of finances and race progression among the republican candidates have been presented in table (1) below. Subsequently, the table provides valuable information on the candidates with regard to when they entered and exited the race as well as the money the candidates were able to raise for campaigns. The findings presented in the table indicates that money is critical in determining the duration in which a candidate can stay on the race. Despite for few cases like the case of Scott Walker who raised a lot of money compared to others like Christie Christopher and dropped from the race even so early, financial disposition points strongly to the ability of candidates to stay on the race. The case of Kasich also points to a lack of a perfect correlation between financial resources to race progression hence pointing to the need to investigate other factors that inform race progression besides finances.

<sup>19</sup> The New York Times (2016). *Which Presidential Candidates Are Winning the Money Race?* Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/us/elections/election-2016-campaign-money-race.html>. Accessed on 11 October 2019.

Table 1: Candidate’s Details and Financial Resources Raised- Republicans

<b>Candidate’s Name</b>	<b>Date of Entry</b>	<b>Date of Exit</b>	<b>Money Raised (In Million \$)</b>	<b>Background</b>
Donald Trump	June 16, 2015	45 <sup>th</sup> President	350.7	Businessperson
John Kasich	July 21, 2015	April 5, 2016	19.6	Ohio Governor
Ted Cruz	March 23, 2015	March 5, 2016	94.3	Texas Senator
Marco Rubio	April 13, 2015	March 15, 2016	48.3	Florida Senator
Ben Carson	April 5, 2015	April 3, 2016	65.1	Medical Doctor
Jeb Bush	June 15, 2015	February 20, 2016	35.5	Florida Governor
Christie Christopher	June 30, 2015	February 10, 2016	8.7	New Jersey Governor
Carly Fiorina	April 4, 2015	February 10, 2016	12.2	Businessperson
Richard Santorum	May 27, 2015	March 2, 2016	2.0	Former Pennsylvania Senator
Rand Paul	July 4, 2015	March 2, 2016	12.4	Kentucky Senator
Mike Huckabee	May 5, 2015	February 1, 2016	4.3	Former Arkansas Governor
George Pataki	May 28, 2015	December 29, 2015	0.5	Former New York Governor
Lindsey Graham	January 6, 2015	December 21, 2015	6.0	South Carolina Senator
Bobby Jindal	June 24, 2015	November 17, 2015	1.4	Louisiana Governor
Scott Walker	July 13, 2015	September 21, 2015	9.5	Wisconsin Governor
Rick Perry	April 6, 2015	November 9, 2015	1.4	Former Texas Governor

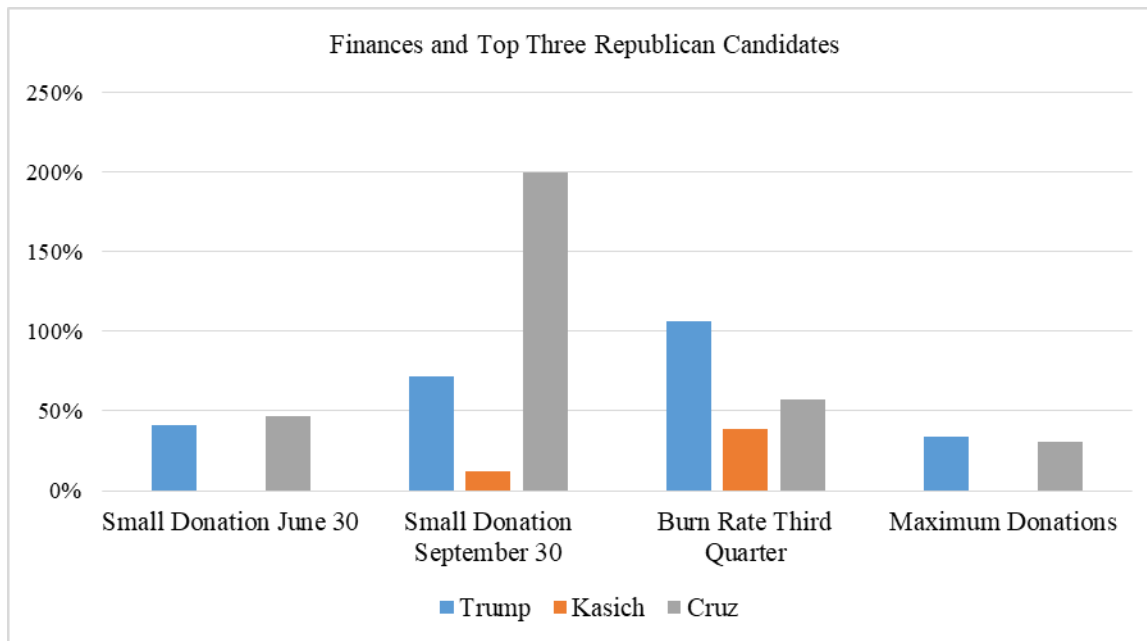
Author’s compilation (2020).

The column on the background of the candidates provides the necessary clues as to the extent to which the voters are familiar with particular candidates. This ties closely with finances whose main purpose is to facilitate familiarization between the voters and the candidates. Trump, Carson, and Fiorina are presented as the only candidates who joined politics from ‘outside’ since they had not contested in the previous elections. Individuals like Jeb Bush was not only a governor but also carried a well-known family name with both his father and brother have been presidents. Despite all these, Carson and Trump still stayed in the race longer than him. This again points to the need to seek for more information beyond the money and famed name that candidates bring on board as they progress on the race. The findings also point to the case of Rick Perry who dropped out of the race due to his inability to raise enough finances to run for the primaries.

From the foregoing, the chart below presents data on the sources of funds for the top three republican candidates and the amount of money they had used by the third quarter of the campaigns. Donations are always linked with the degree of compatibility between the candidate’s policy choices and the preferences of the voters. The source of donations also points to the class of voters that support the candidature of

particular individual aspirants. Trump, for instance, had almost 41% of his total funds come from small donations of \$200 and below. The value increased to 72% by September 2015. This means that Trump’s popularity was increasing among the middle class and lower-middle-class voters. This was relatively lower to those of Cruz who had lots of contribution in terms of percentages from the small donations in comparison to others. This can be used to explain why Cruz progressed in the race almost to the conclusion. Here again, the case of Kasich stands out as a misnomer as this hypothesis cannot be used to explain his progression in the race. The other important factor provided by this chart is the burn rate – the rate at which the candidates used the financial resources within their reach to mobilize voters – with the high rate expected to influence race progression as the candidate would be more familiar with the voters. Here we see that Trump used much of his resources to reach out to the voters. This can be said to have been both rational and tactical having come from business and not politics he had to reach as many voters as possible to enhance his chances of staying in the race. Both Kasich and Cruz had been governor and senator respectively thus, spent relatively less on reaching out to voters presumably because they were comparatively known by American voters.

Figure 2. Sources of finances and burnout rate



Source: Author’s compilation from different sources (2020)

#### DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES, RACE PROGRESSION, AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES MOBILIZED

The case of the democrats is presented by the second table below which indicates, the date of entry and exit from the presidential primaries, the money raised, and the candidate’s background. It is established that the race was majorly between Clinton and Sanders both in terms of the money they raised as well as the time they stayed on the race with Sanders endorsing Clinton on July 12, 2016. O’Malley who trailed the two up to February 1, 2016, only managed to raise 6.4 million dollars. This could explain why he could not progress beyond the early caucuses of Ohio and New Hemisphere since he could not match

Clinton and Sanders both in resources and voters mobilization. Though this case of democrats may not be perfect it points more closely to the correlation between financial resources and candidate’s progression in the US presidential primaries. All the candidates unlike in the case of the Republicans had been public figures with Clinton having been Secretary of State and former first lady and all others having been elected leaders who served as governors and senators.

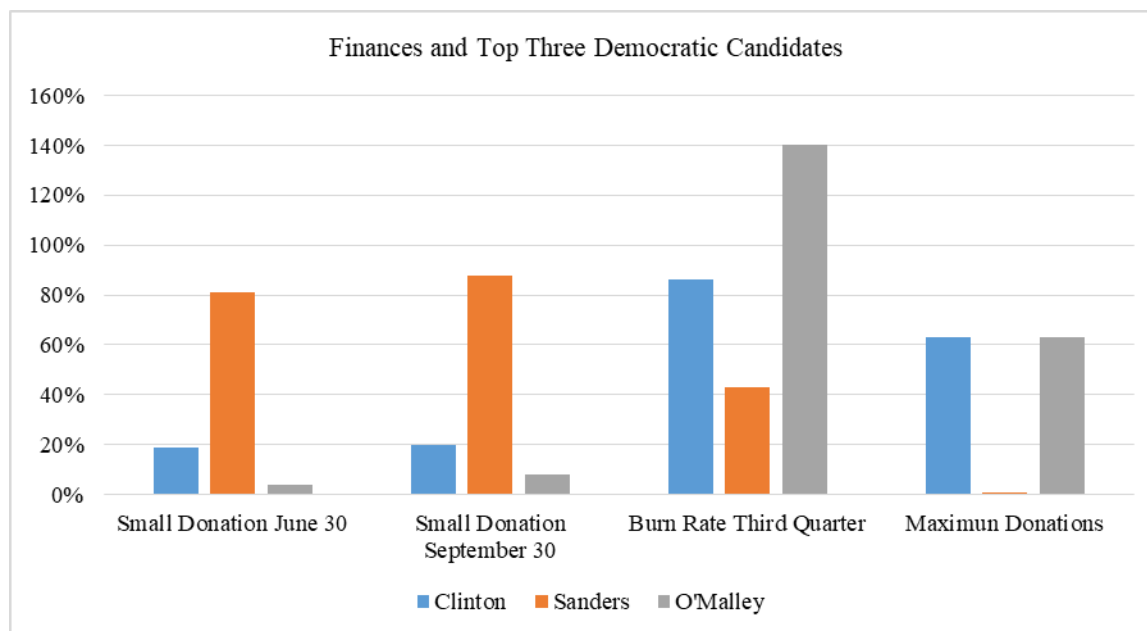
Table 2: Candidate’s Details and Financial Resources Raised- Democrats

<b>Candidate’s Name</b>	<b>Date of Entry</b>	<b>Date of Exit</b>	<b>Money Raised (In Million \$)</b>	<b>Background</b>
Hillary Clinton	April 12, 2015	November 8, 2016	585.7	Former Secretary of State
Bernie Sanders	April 30, 2015	July 12, 2016, by endorsing Clinton	237.6	Vermont Senator
Martin O’Malley	May 30, 2015	February 1, 2016	6.4	Former Maryland Governor
Lincoln Chafee	June 3, 2015	October 23, 2015	0.4	Former Rhode Island Governor
Jim Webb	February 7, 2015	October 20, 2015	0.4	Former Virginia Senator

Author’s compilation (2020).

The chart below indicates that Sanders got a lot of donations from the ordinary voters who contributed to 81% and 88% to his campaign funds by June 30, and September 30 respectively. This indicates that he was popular among ordinary voters with very little maximum donations from the wealthy class. This was a positive sign to his progression on the race which was reflected in the fight he mounted against Clinton until July 12, 2016. His burn out rate notwithstanding since the people who donated were the same people he ought to have reached out to hence had a 43% burn out rate by the third quarter. Clinton on the other hand had a comparatively slight contribution from the small donations according to the percentage of the money she received with a huge chunk being from the wealthy. This implies that she was less popular among the lower and middle-class voters which compelled her to spend much in bolstering her popularity which resulted in a high burn out rate of 86% which was double that of Sanders. The effort paid off by making her very competitive in the race. O’Malley on the other hand had very little donations from the ordinary voters and a little bit more from the wealthy class. Despite his high burn rates which could have helped him progressed much in the race, he dropped on February 1, 2016. This makes the sources of funding and the burn rate also less conclusive in explaining the progression of the US presidential primaries.

Figure 3: Sources of finances and burnout rate



Source: Author's compilation (2020).

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

There are three variables about money that are important for individual candidates to win or stay longer in the presidential primaries. The first one is the amount of money that the candidate can raise at the beginning of the race. This was true with both Clinton, Sanders, and Trump who by the start of their campaigns had raised a significant amount of money to help them run their campaigns. This has also been observed to have been true with George Bush in 2000 when he was campaigning against his main challenger John McCain. Where Bush is reported to have raised 70 million dollars ahead of the campaign period. In their conclusion of why Bush could have won against McCain, Michel et al. (2000) remarked that 'perhaps the real barrier was money'.<sup>20</sup> Consistent with this claim is the observation that has been made by Hagen and Mayer (2000) who have averred that candidates who raised much money in the year preceding elections won nine out of the eleven primaries in the period spanning 1980 to 2004.<sup>21</sup> This points to the importance of money in the presidential primaries. However, going by the case of Scott, the availability of money is not the only factor. This is because Scott was able to raise much more money before the campaigns and had backings of many rich families but still dropped off the race very early.<sup>22</sup> This brings into focus the role of money in the campaigns during the primaries.

<sup>20</sup> Hagen, Michael G., Johnston, Richard, Jamicson, Kathleen H., Dutwin, David & Kenski, Kate (2000). Dynamics of the 2000 Republican Primaries, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 572. Pp. 33-49.

<sup>21</sup> Hagen, G. Michael & Meyer, William G. (2000). "The Modern Politics of Presidential Selection: How Changing the Rules Really Did Changed the Game". In: *In Pursuit of the White House 2000*. New York: Chatham House.

<sup>22</sup> Jacobs, Ben, Roberts, Dan & Sullivan, Zoe (2015). Scott Walker's withdrawal from White House race shows money isn't everything. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/sep/22/>. Accessed on 15 October 2019.



Money is particularly vital in the primaries since there are no party labels as the competitions are always intraparty. Lack of party label means that voters must find other means of getting information about the candidates which can be from the incumbency or other sources of information.<sup>23</sup> The money will, therefore, enable the candidates to reach to voters through different means to not only introduce themselves but also introduce their policies. This relates much to the background of the candidates. Clinton for instance would be perceived to have enjoyed the privileges of the incumbency having been the first lady as well as the Secretary of State. This however was not true for candidates such as Trump, Carson, and Fiorina who were more like ‘outsiders’. The money, therefore, I would postulate served a vital role for the three ‘outsider’ candidates who needed to introduce themselves to the voters and also buy more media airtime to introduce their policies and capabilities. The competition in the primaries is premised on the content of information that candidates can avail to the voters and therefore the money used in developing this content should be able to translate to votes. Welch W.P (1976) in his analysis of the primaries in California and Oregon, has corroborated this position.<sup>24</sup> Subsequently, money played a significant role in the progression in the race for Clinton, Sanders, Trump, and Cruz among other candidates.

Further, money tends to bridge the information gap between the voters and the candidates. This stems from a large number of candidates that the voters need to decide about. The large number coupled with harmony in policies as was the case with 2000 presidential primaries between McCain and Bush, makes money a major determinant.<sup>25</sup> Money, therefore, enables the candidates to reach out to the voters in their numbers. However, this confronts voters with a challenge in deciding on who among the different candidates to vote for. The likelihood of a candidate standing a better chance for winning a chunk of votes from the information chocked voters rest upon consistency and persistency of the candidate in both his content of information and reach to the electorates. This is further, influenced by the ability of the candidate to raise a significant amount of money prior to the election year otherwise the candidate is likely to drop off the race. This would translate to the inability of the candidate to keep pace with others in mobilizing the voters.<sup>26</sup> The performance of Rick Perry as well as that of George Pataki in the 2016 primaries attests to the value of money in supporting the candidate’s progression in the race.

The second factor that goes with money is the burn rate. This brings into focus how much money the candidate spends in the first three-quarters of the campaign period. From the role of money in general, the candidate needs to feed the voters with the content of information regarding their candidature. Despite being related to the degree of candidate’s familiarity with the voters, it also relates to countering the content of information that might be damaging to a candidate. For instance, Clinton perceived more like an incumbent who would suffer prejudice and bear blame for the policy failures of both her husband and Obama’s administration. She had to spend a lot of money in the distribution of information clarifying her position on the alleged failures and what she could do differently had she had the power not playing the First Lady role and the Secretary of State. This could probably explain why she had a high burn out rate compared to her fierce critic and competitor Sanders. The reverse is true for the candidates like Trump, Carson, and Fiorina who had to burn out much of their resources to introduce themselves to voters and build positive perceptions and good rapport with the voters. This explains why Trump’s burn out rate was

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<sup>23</sup> Breaux, A. David & Gierzynski, Anthony (1991). It’s Money That Matters: Campaign Expenditures and State Legislative Primaries, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 16 (3). Pp. 429–443.

<sup>24</sup> W.P. (1976). The Effectiveness of Expenditures in State Legislative Races, *American Politics Quarterly*, Vol. 4, (3). Pp. 333–356.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>26</sup> Norrander, Barbara & Smith, Gregg W. (1985). Type of Contest, Candidate Strategy, and Turnout in Presidential Primaries, *American Politics Quarterly* 13 (1). Pp. 28–50.

not only among the highest among the Republican candidates but also a little bit more than that of Clinton.

This might not also be the sole explanation for the progression of candidates in the presidential primaries. Despite other studies confirming that even in the legislative primaries, there is a direct correlation between campaign expenditures and vote share with the magnitude varying from state to state.<sup>27</sup> This was not pretty much the case in the 2016 presidential primaries. This is because of the increased role of the media which Chris Henick – a strategist with Karl Rove in Bush’s White House – has typified as ‘paid media’ and ‘earned media’.<sup>28</sup> Paid media corresponds to the number of airtime candidates subscribe to whereas earned media is the attraction that a candidate draws from the media due to other qualities like oratory skills or ways of articulation of issues. Stemming from this, it has been argued that the value of advertising in relation to the burn rate that money would buy especially in the 2016 presidential primaries declined due to media pleasant frolics of individual candidates like Trump.<sup>29</sup> This points to the value that came with the burn rate of Trump in media advertisements and campaign content dissemination. The two factors of burn rate and value of advertisement combined in favor of Trump hence propelling him much within the race.

Stemming from the above, it is observed that it was a big challenge for other Republicans, who had to scramble for visibility given the domination of television screens by Trump.<sup>30</sup> The value of money spent also played a critical role. This points to other additional qualities that the candidate brings on board since the earned media would not only mean increased coverage but also increased viewership which goes hand in hand with popularity if well managed. The increased viewership and popularity that come with earned media often manifest through news coverage and commentaries on both the traditional media and social media outlets. It is averred that earned media often overshadow paid media in value.<sup>31</sup> For instance, it is reported that in February 2016, ‘Trump earned \$400 million worth of free media’ the value that is equivalent to what McCain spent in his 2008 campaigns.<sup>32</sup> The final value of earned media by Trump was estimated at 2 billion dollars as compared to that of Clinton which was estimated at \$746 million.<sup>33</sup> These combined to propel Trump and Clinton in clinching the party tickets in the 2016 primaries.

Similarly, the opinion polls helped to elevate the position of Trump which then gave him an upper hand in winning the approval of many voters. The polls influence voters’ preference as some voters who would want to vote strategically for a potential winner of the nominations would look up to the polls for a decision. This underpins the role of earned media and burn rate for media-friendly candidates in their progression on the race and eventual win for a candidate like Trump. The popularity that comes with earned media often sways opinions thus increasing approvals for race progression. This fits well within Bartel’s model of evaluating who will win in the primaries especially on the candidate’s viability and how this influences the voters’ choice.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>31</sup> Confessore, Nicholas & Yourish, Karen (2016). *\$2 Billion Worth of Free Media for Donald Trump*. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/16/upshot/measuring-donald-trumps-mammoth-advantage-in-free-media.html>. Accessed on 22 July 2020.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 11.

The third factor that is related to money is the source of the money. The candidates in the presidential primaries are allowed to raise funds from different sources categorized differently into those of 200 dollars and below and those of 2700 dollars among other categorizations for company's donations as well as limited and unlimited donations. The 200 dollars and below is one of the most significant categories since it is the amount that many ordinary voters in the US can afford. The more a candidate gets of this donation the more the candidate seems to enjoy the support of the ordinary Americans and the likelihood of a longer progression on the race. Sanders, for instance, received much of his donations from the category of 200 dollars and below with the contributions increasing between June and September 30, 2015. This meant that many ordinary American voters identified with Sanders. This to a large extent explains the resiliency that was exhibited by Sanders in his progression in the race against Clinton.

Cruz and Trump among the top three candidates on the Republican side received quite a large portion of their funds from the ordinary Americans. Cruz for instance had the highest percentage of the small contributions followed by Trump though at a distance. This as well can offer us clues as to why both Trump and Cruz were able to progress much on the race with Trump finally winning. Of importance, however, is the value of the small contributions which can be translated to mean a vote of confidence by the ordinary Americans who can commit their resources to finance their policy convergence in a candidate's manifesto. This general act of approval to some degree guarantees a candidate some votes among the contributors who would want to ensure they get elected to implement the policies. The maximum donations from wealthy Americans is also an important act of approval but may not be as much as that of small donations as the case of Scott who was able to raise money only from the wealthy class hence facing more challenges culminating in his early withdrawal.

Stemming from the above, Clinton got much more donations from the wealthy Americans compared to Sanders. This could point to the reasons as to why Sanders constantly claimed that Clinton was a project by the party and the establishment meant to maintain the status quo.<sup>35</sup> This leads to a consideration of voter turnout in the primaries. This is important in understanding why Clinton could have won against Sanders. In the 2016 US presidential primaries, the voter turnout for both Democrats and Republicans averaged 28.5% with that of the Republicans in 29 States averaging 16.6% and after the withdrawal of other candidates with Trump being clear eventual nominee the turnout averaged only 8.8%. The intense battle between Clinton and Sanders made the turnout which just averaged 14.4% to be sustained throughout the primaries.<sup>36</sup> Subsequently, it has been argued that this low turnout means that only particular party loyalists vote.<sup>37</sup> The fact that voters in the primaries are credited with exposure and knowledge in political matters explains the less variation in voter turnout.<sup>38</sup>

The drastic drop in the voter turnout on the side of the Republicans when it was almost clear that Trump would become the nominee after 29 primaries blend smoothly with the notion of voters as strategic in casting their votes. Richard R. Lau (2013) for instance has opined that this indicates that voters are driven by other issues besides ideology and the generally low turnout raises questions on the representativeness

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<sup>35</sup> Peters, Gerhard & Woolley John T. (2016). "Press Release: Sanders and Clinton Fight to Draw in Iowa". The American Presidency Project. Available at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=114465>. Accessed on 30 October 2019.

<sup>36</sup> Desilver, Drew (2016). Turnout was high in the 2016 primary season, but just short of 2008 record. Available at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/10/turnout-was-high-in-the-2016-primary-season-but-just-short-of-2008-record/>. Accessed on 2 November 2019.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>38</sup> Jewell, Malcolm E. (1984). *Parties and Primaries: Nominating State Governors*. New York: Praeger.

of the candidate who finally gets nominated.<sup>39</sup> This low turnout in states where primaries are conducted late is worrying given the fact that the main reason for the 1972 reforms was to allow many voters to take part in the nomination of the party candidate a role that was hitherto a preserve of the party elites. It is also worthy to mention that the party elites still have a say in the election of the party nominee since a particular number of delegates is reserved for the top party leadership who also vote in the final convention.

Though the party elites who participate in the nomination especially at the final convention only make up a small percentage they still determine the fate of the nominees. For instance, in the case of Democrats Clinton had 2220 pledged delegates against Sanders 1831 yet for the nomination, the number required is 2383 with 639 unpledged delegates. Sanders could have still won the primaries since he only needs 552 votes from the unpledged delegates to win however he only managed 48 and Clinton scooped a whopping 591 unpledged delegates. This attests to Sanders's suspicion that Clinton was a project of the party elites and the establishment. On the part of the Republicans, Trump had a clear win over Cruz having garnered 1447 pledged delegates against 551 pledged delegates of Cruz. Trump even before the unpledged delegates polled, he had already surpassed the minimum number of delegates of 1237 needed for a candidate to win. It is also interesting to note that apart from the Iowa Caucus that Cruz won 8 to 7 against Trump, the latter was able to beat him in four subsequent nominations including in Alaska where Trump had 36 against Cruz's 13. In the final analysis, Trump was able to lead in 36 states whereas Cruz was only able to lead in 9 states, with Rubio leading in three and Kasich only leading in Ohio.<sup>40</sup> Trump's win can, therefore, be attributed to the money he raised both from the ordinary voters to the strategic spending where his burn out rate was high by the third quarter and also the value he got from the media with Trump's personality having earned him media attention.

## IMPLICATIONS ON DEMOCRACY

How the candidates' fortunes were defined and the voters responded in voting for the candidates can be understood better within the post-democracy theory. Crouch has opined that democracy flourishes only with the provision of an expanded room for active participation by the mass of ordinary citizens through discussions and organizations in framing the public agenda. This proposition is augmented by the 1972 reforms which created room for ordinary party members to participate in the nominations. However, the low voter turnout as is witnessed in the 2016 presidential primaries points to declining democracy as the masses are not taking the opportunity to choose leaders which also impacts negatively on the representativeness as espoused by democratic principles. The low voter turnout points to the nature of voters described by Crouch as those who 'play a passive quiescent, even apathetic part, responding only to the signals given them'.<sup>41</sup>

This was evident in the primaries especially in the Republican primaries specifically after the first 29 primaries where it was now evident that Trump would win with the turnout dropping by half from 16% to 8%.<sup>42</sup> This also confirmed the claim by Crouch that political elites have mastered the art of manipulation of the masses' demands. This brings into question why some states like Iowa and New Hampshire despite having a low number of delegates is given more preferences to other states with a large number of

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>40</sup> Andrews, Wilson, Bennett, Kitty & Parlapiano, Alicia (2016). 2016 Delegate Count and Primary Results. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/us/elections/primary-calender-and-results.html>. Accessed on 29 October 2019.

<sup>41</sup> Crouch, Colin (2004). *Why Post-Democracy?*. In: Post-Democracy. New York: Polity Press.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 38.

delegates like Texas or California. The question that stems from this scenario is how democratic is it to allow a small number of people to decide on the fate of candidates while the majority are only expected to confirm the will of the minority. This qualifies the claim by Crouch that in post-democracy, the ordinary mass of people is relegated to the ‘role of manipulated, rare, and passive participants’.<sup>43</sup>

The race for primaries in 2016 was much more characterized by advertising through different media platforms with each candidate trying to outdo one another on these platforms. Crouch identifies this as a feature of post-democracy where Orwellian kind of journalism is absent and has been replaced by ‘adverts of high-impact words’ with limited room for interrogation. The personality-based approach used in the 2016 campaigns in the primaries confirms what Crouch has decried as a ‘degradation of mass political communication’ since such personality-based campaigns share many characteristics with those carried out by dictators.<sup>44</sup> The description of Trump as a media-friendly person with outstanding personality and style has been further described as a feature of post-democracy where policies play a little role as individuals and their personal qualities get more attention. The 2016 US presidential primaries displayed some features which are a deviation from both popular and liberal democratic principles.

The media played much more role in influencing the fortunes of the candidates and money both in terms of the amount available and the sources which made the whole process of nominations an elite affair with little influence from the masses. The question that would be asked is whether how the nominations were conducted could have influenced the demonstrations and low ratings that President Trump has had to contend with while in office? The demonstrations have been compounded with the protests against the death of George Floyd in the hands of the police. These demonstrations christened *Black-Lives-Matter* portray public displeasure with how the politicians have conducted state affairs. The expression of this dissatisfaction has been termed as healthy for democracy as it demonstrates political maturity and change in values that are propelled by prosperity and technology hence creating a critical citizenry that is opposed to the status quo.<sup>45</sup> It remains to be seen if the active participation by the citizenry would be reflected in the ballot in enhancing the representativeness of the presidential primaries in the future.

## CONCLUSION

Money is a very important factor in presidential primaries. The amount of money that an aspirant raises in the previous year is very important in helping the aspirant progress on the race with those unable to raise significant amounts falling off the race soonest. Trump and Clinton were both able to raise a significant amount of money before the start of the campaigns and this gave them a clear advantage in the race. Similarly, the two aspirants were able to get funds from diverse sources with a critical portion coming to them from the minimum contributions of 200 US dollars and below signifying they enjoyed the approval of the ordinary American voters. The progression in the race by both Sanders and Cruz would also be associated with both the amount they were able to raise as well as the diverse sources from which the funds came especially the minimum contributions. The differing fortune for the Republican candidates was influenced more by the burn out rate and the value of the spending. Trump used much of the money he raised by the third quarter of the race since he was relatively new to American voters and had to reach out to as many of them as possible which paid off.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Susan, Pharr, Robert, Putnam & Russell, J. Dalton (2000). Trouble in the Advanced Democracies? A Quarter-Century of Declining Confidence, *Journal of Democracy* 11 (2) Pp. 5-25.

Cruz however had a low burn out rate arguably because he was already familiar with American voters having been a Senator representing Texas. The difference however came with the value that Trump got from the media since he was classified as media-friendly due to his style of tackling issues through the media hence wide popularity which relegated other candidates to far lower positions. Trump was able to exploit this opportunity to have a decisive win by the end of 29 primaries. Trump's win of the primaries can, therefore, be explained from his ability to raise a significant amount of money in good time and from various sources and the strategic spending of the money early enough in familiarizing with American voters coupled with the value that he got from the media coverage due to his personality which made him media-friendly hence dominating other republican candidates. On the part of the Democrats, there was a fierce battle between Clinton and Sanders with the only difference coming from the party elites through unpledged delegates. In this case, party elites can be said with some level of comfort to have influenced the outcome. However, it is noteworthy that both Clinton and Sanders had a significant amount of funds from diverse sources and were able to spend the resources also much more strategically a case close to a tie that was only broken by the party elites. In summary therefore with finances notwithstanding, the paper concludes that Trump's nomination was more of the media and Clinton's more of the party elites.