

Two-Party System Historical Eras in the U.S.: Partisan Re-alignment/De-alignment Periods

Historical Eras	Issue(s)	Major-Party Issue Stands		Voter Shift(s)	Major-Party Competitive Balance
1st Party System 1788 (1st election = 1789) G. Washington (Federalist) J. Adams (Federalist) (1800) T. Jefferson (Democratic-Republican) [elected by US House] A. Burr (Democratic-Republican) J. Adams (Federalist) C. Pinckney (Federalist)	Aligning Order vs. freedom - Should the states ratify the proposed new Constitution? - Should a Bill of Rights be added to the Constitution? - Should the national law be supreme over state law in the new federal system?	Federalists - avored ratification - national supremacy	Anti-Federalists (Democratic-Republicans) - avored states’ rights - insisted on individual freedom guarantees in Bill of Rights	Class voting 1789-1800: suffrage essentially restricted to upper-class 1800- : widespread easing of suffrage restrictions led to a rapid increase in lower-class voters who were soon a majority of the electorate - two other factors were the expansion of free public education and the creation of the ‘penny’ press newspapers	Federalists lost initial dominance to Democratic-Republicans 1788-1799 Federalists dominant; 1800-1823Anti-Federalists (Democratic-Republican) dominant - except for national supremacist (Federalist) Supreme Court under John Marshall (1801-35) - Federalists lost two key leaders: J. Madison defected to AF in 1797 & A. Hamilton killed in 1804
2nd Party System 1824 J. Q. Adams (Whig) [elected by US House] A. Jackson (Democrat) [popular-vote winner] H. Clay (Whig) W. Crawford (Whig)	Dealigning Order vs. freedom - Who should construct and regulate the national economic infrastructure – communications, transportation, banking & finance Equality vs. freedom - Should the federal government abolish or otherwise limit slavery?	Whigs for massive federal subsidization and regulation of the emerging national economy	Democrats opposed both	Regional voting - agrarian South and West supported Democrats - more urban and manufacturing Northeast supported Whigs	Democrats & Whigs competitive - most presidential and congressional elections fairly evenly divided - On the Supreme Court, Roger Taney (1836-64) reversed the national supremacy doctrine of the John Marshall Court with a new doctrine of ‘dual federalism’ - only two Whig presidents, W.H. Harrison & Z. Taylor, but both died in office
3rd Party System 1860 A. Lincoln (R) [electoral-vote winner with only 39% of the popular vote] S. Douglas (NorthernD) J. Bell (Constitutional Union) J. Breckinridge (SouthernD) (1876) Hayes (R) [elected by congressional commission] Tilden (D) [popular-vote winner] (1888) B. Harrison (R) [electoral-vote winner] G. Cleveland (D) [popular-vote winner]	Realigning Equality vs. freedom - Should the federal government abolish or otherwise limit slavery? Order vs. freedom - Do states have a right to secede from the Union? (Lincoln clearly saw this as the more important issue)	Republicans - avored preserving the union and the abolition of slavery N. Democrats and Constitutional Union Party - avored preservation of union but states’ rights on slavery	S. Democrats avored preservation of slavery and states’ rights, including the right to secede from the union	Regional voting 1861-65: 11 CSA out of union 1865-76, Northern occupation during Reconstruction guaranteed voting rights of Southern blacks 1876, the end of Reconstruction allowed return of Southern white (Democratic) voters to impose white supremacy in the South with the denial of black rights through the Black Codes or Jim-Crow laws	Republicans initially dominant, but Democrats became competitive after end of Reconstruction 1860-76: Republicans dominant 1876-1895: Democrats once again competitive G. Cleveland only Democratic president (two non-contiguous terms) - but most presidential contests fairly close after 1876

CRITICAL ELECTIONS	REALIGNING ISSUE(S)	MAJOR-PARTY ISSUE STANDS		VOTER SHIFT(S)	MAJOR-PARTY COMPETITIVE BALANCE
4TH PARTY SYSTEM 1896 W. McKinley (R) W.J. Bryan (D) (1912) W. Wilson (D) T. Roosevelt (Progressive) W.H. Taft (R) (1924) C. Coolidge (R) J. Davis (D) R. LaFollette (Progressive)	Order vs. freedom - Should the federal government switch from the gold to the silver standard? - Should the federal government switch from protectionism to free trade? - Should the federal government switch from restrictive immigration policies to an open-door policy?	Republicans - Gold standard - Protectionism - Restrict immigration	Democrats - Silver standard - Free trade - Open door	Class voting - Urban industrial labor swung to Republicans - Southern & Western farmers stayed with Democrats	Republicans dominant over Democrats W. Wilson was the only Democratic president and he only won in 1912 because the Republicans split and in 1916 because he pledged to ‘keep us out of war’ - Both parties co-oped Progressive issue stands – the Republicans under T. Roosevelt and the Democrats under W.J. Bryan and W. Wilson
5TH PARTY SYSTEM 1932 F.D. Roosevelt (D) H. Hoover (R) (1948) H. Truman (D) T. Dewey (R) S. Thurmond (States’ Rights)	Realigning Equality vs. freedom - Should the federal government provide massive public assistance programs to the unemployed and elderly? - Should the federal government significantly expand its regulation of the economy to guarantee more equitable outcomes in banking, securities exchanges, labor-management, farming, etc.?	Republicans - let state and private charities handle public assistance - let the free market regulate the economy	Democrats a “New Deal” on both	Class voting - a new Democratic majority came mostly from the lower and working classes and was a “coalition of diverse minorities” – - union labor - northern inner-city Catholics, Jews, and Blacks - white Southerners - the smaller Republican coalition came mainly from the middle-to-upper classes and was largely non-Southern WASP (white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant)	Democrats regained dominance over Republicans for the first time since 1860 - FDR elected to 4 terms H. Truman won upset victory in 1948 D. Eisenhower was the only Republican elected president in this period
6TH PARTY SYSTEM 1968 R. Nixon (R) H. Humphrey (D) G. Wallace (Am. Independent) (2000) G.W. Bush [electoral-vote winner] A. Gore [popular-vote winner]	Dealigning Equality vs. freedom - Civil rights Order vs. freedom - Vietnam war - Crime - Public morality	Hot-button wedge issues continue to divide both parties Equality vs. freedom - Affirmative action - Election-campaign finance - Environmental protection - Globalization of the economy - Health care - Public education - Social Security - Taxes	Order vs. freedom - Establishment of religion – abortion, homosexuality, fetal tissue research, public-school prayer - Balanced federal budget - Defense spending - Anti-terrorism policy - Immigration - War on drugs	Both party coalitions internally divided - many socially conservative Democrats became “Reagan Democrats” in both the North and South - many Republican “country-club” economic conservatives and “soccer Moms” are opposed to much of the issue agenda of the social-conservative wing of the GOP - the South realigns from one-party Democratic to two-party competitive - the Northeast realigns from the most Republican region in presidential voting to the most Democratic region	Neither party dominant nationwide - this era produces the longest period of divided party control of government in history - increased elite polarization - in electorate: - decrease in partisan loyalty - increase in political independents - increase in split-ticket voting - decrease in political trust and turnout