Chapter 5: Political Parties  
Section 2

Objectives

1. Understand the origins of political parties in the United States.
2. Identify and describe the three major periods of single-party domination and describe the current era of divided government.

* Key Terms
* **incumbent**: the current officeholder
* **faction**: one of two or more competing groups
* **spoils system**: the practice of awarding public offices, contracts, and other governmental favors to those who supported the party in power
* **electorate**: the people eligible to vote
* **sectionalism**: a devotion to the interests of a particular region

Introduction

* How has the two-party system affected the history of American government?
  + During different periods in American history, either the Democratic or Republican Party has dominated national politics and the branches of the federal government.
  + Recent history has seen the federal government divided between two parties.

The Nation’s First Parties

* The battle over ratification of the Constitution led to the rise of the first major parties.
* The **Federalist Party** was formed by supporters of the Constitution.
  + They wanted a **stronger national government** and policies that helped financial, commercial, and manufacturing interests.
  + Alexander Hamilton and John Adams were key representatives.

Democratic-Republican Party

* Opposing the Federalists was the **Democratic-Republican Party**.
  + They wanted a more **limited national government**, with policies aimed at helping farmers, planters, labor, and small business.
  + Key leaders such as Thomas Jefferson and James Madison favored a strict interpretation of the Constitution.

The Democratic Party

* The election of 1796 was the first time two parties fought for the presidency.
  + The Federalists won, but faded from power after losing the 1800 election.
  + The Democratic-Republicans later split apart and gave rise to the Democratic Party.
* The Era of the Democrats
* The Democratic Party won 13 of 15 presidential elections from 1800 to 1860.
* In the 1830s, President Andrew Jackson began a period of so-called ***Jacksonian democracy***, marked by three major political changes:
  + Voting rights were expanded to include all white males, not just those with property.
  + A huge increase in the number of elected offices around the country.
  + The spread of the spoils system.

Democrats v. Whigs

* The **Democrats** drew much of their support from **small farmers, pioneers**, and **slaveholders** in the South and West.
* Their greatest rivals were the **Whigs**, who were supported by **wealthier merchant** and **industrial interests** in the East.
* The debate over slavery split the Whigs and the Democrats apart in the 1850s.
  + The Democrats were split between northern and southern factions.
  + Many Whigs and antislavery Democrats joined the new Republican Party in 1854.

Era of the Republicans

* The Republican Party won 14 of 18 presidential elections from 1860 to 1932.
* Important events:
  + End of slavery; American politics moved back toward national and away from regional interests.
* The Republican dominated nationally.
  + They had the support of farmers, laborers, business and financial interests, and freed African Americans.
  + The Republicans benefited from years of economic prosperity.

Economic Turmoil

* An economic downturn made the election of 1896 critical.
  + Labor unions joined small farmers and small business owners to back the Democrats.
  + The Republicans won by appealing to a wider range of voters, but the Democrats gained new support outside the South.
  + End of the Republican Era
* The third-party candidate had an influence on the election of 1912.
  + The Republicans lost the presidency in 1912 largely due to a third party candidate.
    - Former Republican Theodore Roosevelt ran as a member of the new Progressive Party and split the Republican vote, helping Democrat Woodrow Wilson win.

Party Identity: Past and Present

* Cartoonist Thomas Nast has been credited with creating the party symbols in is 1874 cartoon for the magazine *Harper’s Weekly*.
  + Originally, neither party adopted his ideas. Over time, each party assumed and revised the symbols, which havebecome synonymous with party identity.

Return of the Democrats

* The Democrats won 7 out of 9 presidential elections from 1932 to 1968.
* The Great Depression sparked the comeback of the Democrats.
  + With the economy in ruins, the Democrats gained the support of southerners, small farmers, big-city political organizations, labor unions, and minority groups.

Era of Divided Government

* The Republicans won 7 out of 10 presidential elections from 1968 to 2004.
* The Democrats controlled Congress for most of this period.
  + Republicans controlled Congress from 1995 to 2000 while Democrat Bill Clinton was President.
* This division of power meant that neither party could easily control the agenda of the government without making compromises.

Republicans in the 1980s

* The Republicans made major changes to U.S. foreign trade and domestic policies during the 1980s.
  + Republican candidates Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush won three landslide victories during this period.

Political Parties Today

* In recent years, control of Congress, particularly the Senate, has shifted back and forth between the major parties.
  + Typically newly elected Presidents has a “coattail” effect that brings other candidates from their party to Congress. In recent years, this has not been the case.
* The Era of the Democrats, 1800-1860
  + A coalition of farmers, planters, debtors, and pioneers backed the Democrats, who dominated the government after the election of 1800
  + The Democrats were opposed by the Federalists, Whigs, and finally the Republicans
* The Era of the republicans, 1860-1932
  + Republicans dominated the government, supported by Northern and Western farmers, financial and business interests, and African Americans
  + Democrats during this period controlled the “Solid South”, and rebuilt national support from that base

Basics

* The Return of the Democrats, 1932-1968
  + During the Great Depression, Roosevelt built a new Democratic coalition, based on the support of the Southerners, small farmers, organized labor, minorities, and big-city political organizations
  + The New Deal marked a fundamental shift in the public’s attitude toward big government
* The Start of a New Era
  + Since 1968, Republicans have dominated the White House, While Democrats controlled Congress
  + This era of divided government is unprecedented in American history