

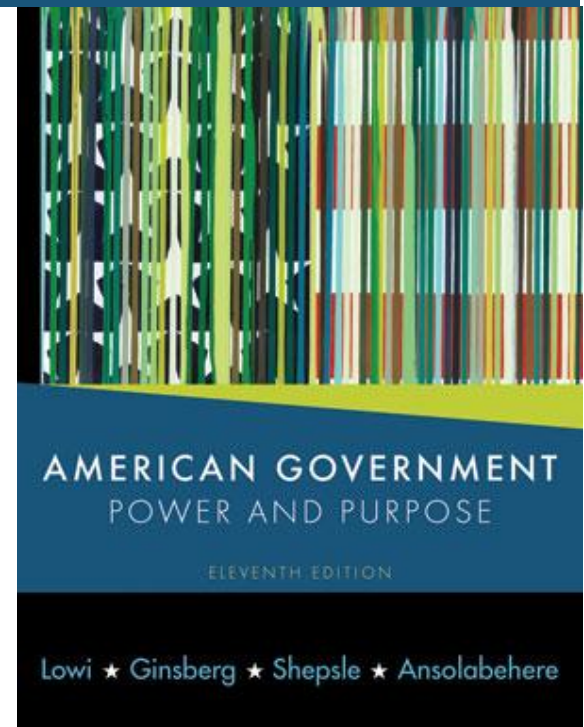
11

Political Parties

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

POWER AND PURPOSE

Lowi ♦ Ginsberg ♦ Shepsle ♦ Ansolabehere



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Why Do Political Parties Form?

Political parties seek to control the government by electing their members to office, and thus by controlling the personnel of government.

Parties:

- ▶ Facilitate collective action in the electoral process;
- ▶ Help resolve collective choice in the policy-making process;
- ▶ Regulate career advancement of politicians, thus dealing with the potential threat of individual political ambitions.

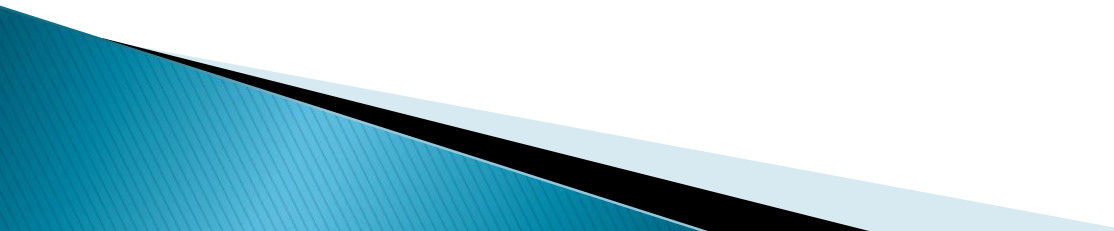
To accomplish these multiple aims, political parties perform multiple **functions**.

Parties:

- ▶ Recruit candidates;
- ▶ Nominate candidates;
- ▶ Work to get out the vote;
- ▶ Facilitate mass electoral choice;
- ▶ Influence and coordinate the activities of the national government.

Party Development in Early America

The Constitution's framers did not anticipate the formation of political parties.

- Framers such as Hamilton, Washington, and Jefferson regarded parties as divisive and potentially detrimental to the republic.
 - Despite their antipathy toward parties, deep divisions over the future of the republic led Hamilton and Jefferson to lead the formation of the first American parties.
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The Two-Party System

Though the framers of the Constitution did not anticipate nor want parties, America has a stable two-party system that first emerged in the late eighteenth century as a conflict between the Federalists, led by Alexander Hamilton, and the Republicans, led by Thomas Jefferson.



Democrats

The modern Democratic Party emerged out of the party established by Thomas Jefferson in the late eighteenth century and revitalized by Andrew Jackson in the 1820s.

Republicans

The modern Republican Party emerged in the 1850s as an anti-slavery party and out of the remnants of the Whig Party.

In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville distinguished between “great” and “small” political parties.

Great parties are “those which cling to principles rather than to their consequences; to general and not to special cases; to ideas and not to men.”

Small parties are “generally deficient in political good faith” and lacking in general principle.

Writing in the 1830s, Tocqueville lamented that “America has had great parties, but has them no longer.”

Inasmuch as Tocqueville lamented the decline of parties from the time of Jefferson and Hamilton to that of Jacksonian America, contemporary scholars look back on the 1830s and much of the nineteenth century as the “golden age” of American parties, which preceded the significant “decline” of party strength in the twentieth century.

At various points in American history, a new party supplants the ruling party, becoming in turn the dominant political force; scholars call these enduring changes in party strength **electoral realignments**.

Realignments tend to involve:

- ▶ a large number of voters changing their party allegiance;
- ▶ a great deal of voter participation in an election;
- ▶ a stable change in the party controlling the government.

Realignments:

1800 → Jeffersonian Republicans dominate.

1828 → Jacksonian Democrats “democratize” American politics.

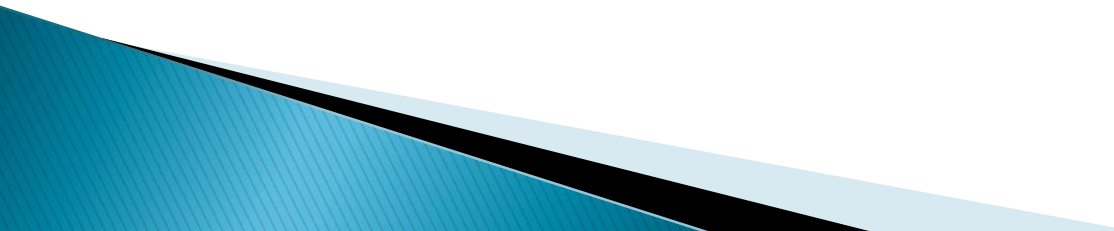
1860 → The emergence of Republicans (and their victory in the Civil War) yields to post-Reconstruction competitive balance between Democrats and Republicans.



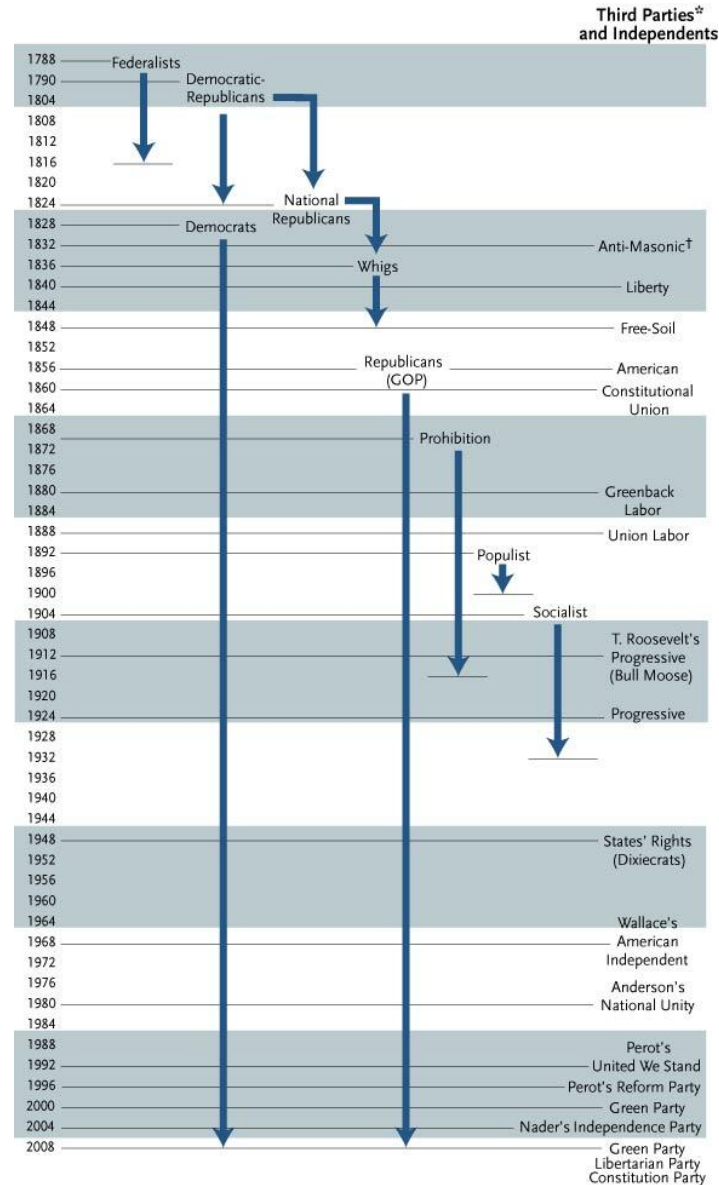
1896 → Republicans reassert their dominance.

1932 → Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal produce an extraordinary era of Democratic dominance.

1968 → Richard Nixon's victory and the demise of the Democrats' "solid South" produces a highly competitive era of divided party control of government.



How The Party System Evolved

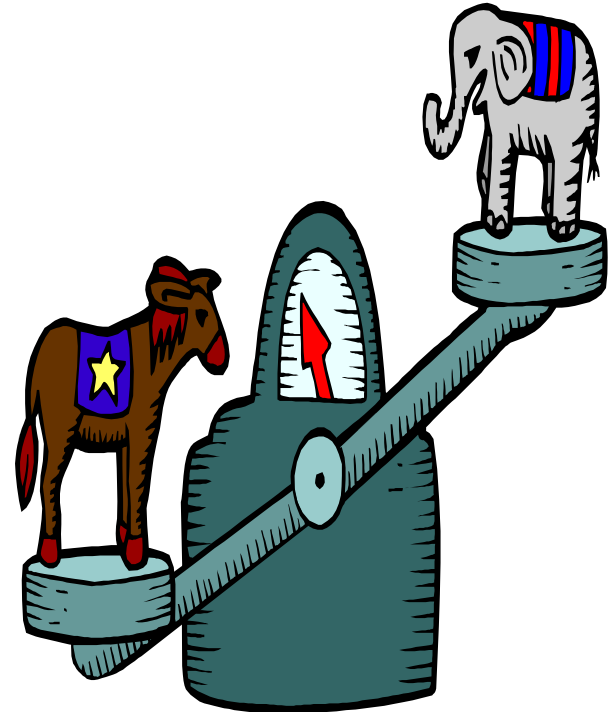


Some observers wondered if Obama's 2008 victory represented a potentially realigning election.

Voter interest and turnout were higher than is typical, and Obama's victory was large and involved winning what previously had been Republican states.

But will it last? It is too soon to tell if 2008 was a realigning election, as durability is a defining feature of a party system.

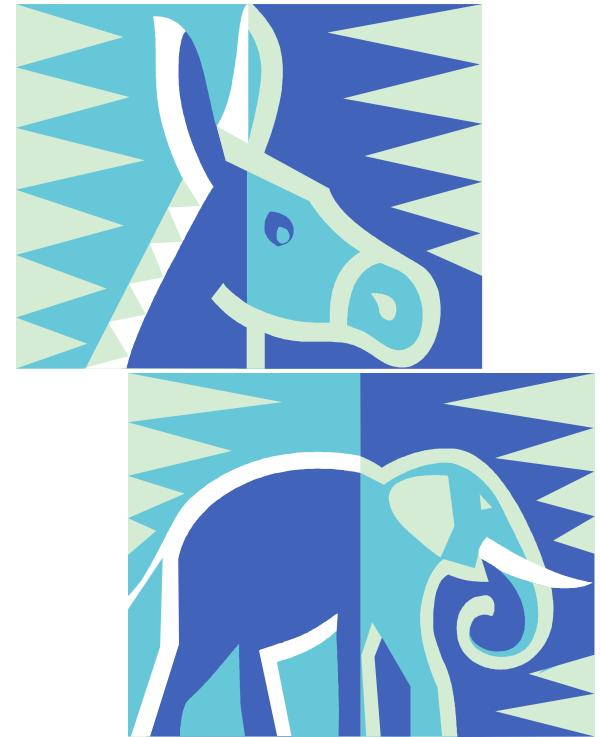
Whereas **electoral realignments** represent a shift in the balance of power *between* the two political parties and involve significant changes in American politics, America's two-party system has proven remarkably stable over time.



Third parties tend to compete (if weakly) against the two major parties in America, as they did in 2008.

On occasion, third-party candidates can have a great deal of influence over ideas and electoral outcomes.

Whether or not they are influential, there are always third-party candidates on the ballot.



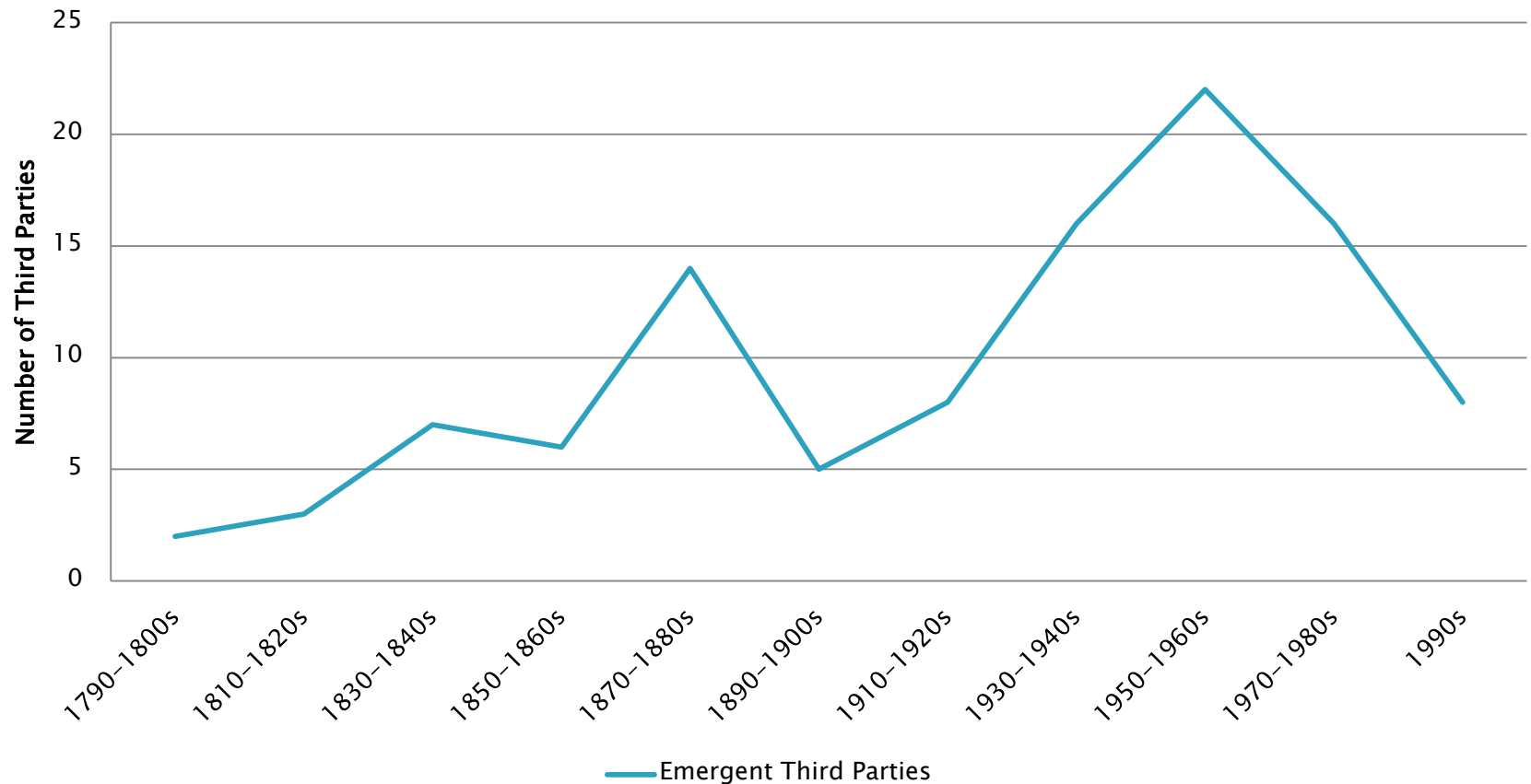
Parties and Candidates, 2008

Candidate	Party	Vote Total	Percent of Vote
Barack Obama	Democrat	69,456,897	52.38%
John McCain	Republican	59,934,814	45.20%
Ralph Nader	Independent	736,804	0.56%
Robert Barr	Libertarian	524,524	0.40%
Charles Baldwin	Constitution	196,461	0.00%
Cynthia McKinney	Green	161,195	0.15%
Richard Duncan	Independent	3,902	0.12%
John Polachek	New Party	1,149	0.00%
Frank McEnulty	New American Independent	828	0.00%
Jeffrey Wamboldt	We the People	764	0.00%
Jeffrey Boss	Vote Here Party	639	0.00%
George Phillies	Libertarian (New Hampshire)	522	0.00%
Ted Weill	Reform	481	0.00%
Bradford Lyttle	U.S. Pacifist	110	0.00%
Total Turnout = 132,588,514			
SOURCE: www.census.gov			



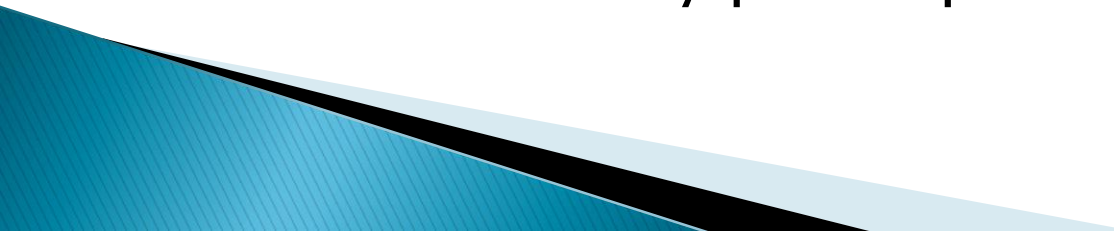
Periods of social flux, economic crisis, and uncertainty that the two main parties fail to address tend to produce a proliferation of third parties.

The Emergence of Third Parties, 1790s–1990s



Source: Author's tabulation of the emergence (beginning date) of "major" third parties as chronicled in Immanuel Ness and James Ciment, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Third Parties in America* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2000); see especially Table of Contents and Introduction, pp. xx–xxi.

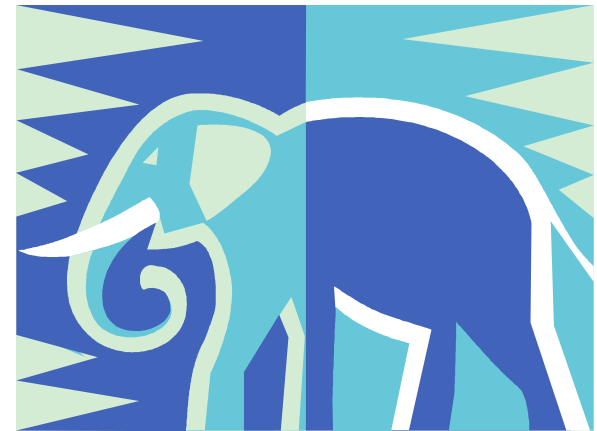
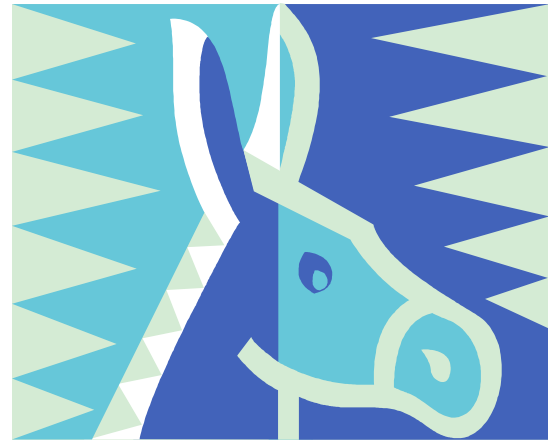
Although many movements have produced third parties throughout American history, third parties tend to be short-lived because:

- One of the two major parties adopts their issues;
 - The single-member plurality electoral system limits their opportunities for electoral success;
 - The periods of flux, the crises, and the uncertainties that produce them subside or are addressed by public policies.
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Party Decline

According to political scientist V. O. Key, Jr., there are three key aspects of political parties:

- Party-in-the-electorate;
- Party-as-organization;
- Party-in-government.





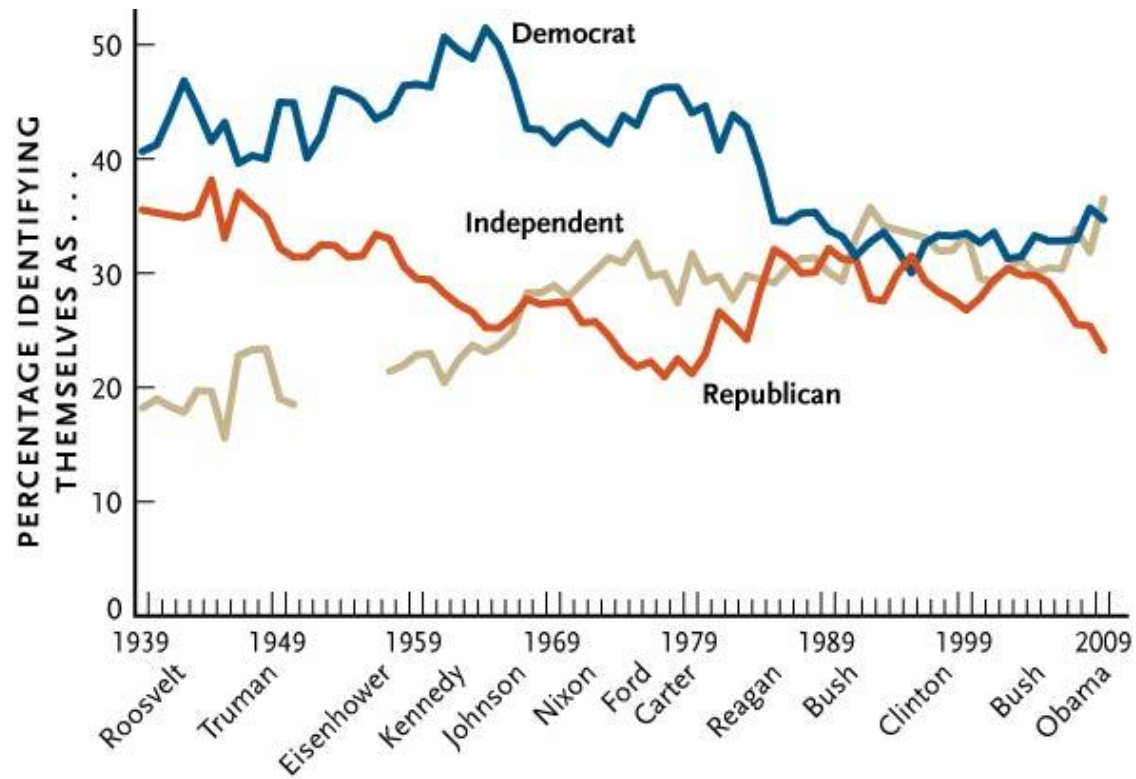
Party-in-the-electorate refers to voters' attachments to, and identifications with, political parties.

To measure the party-in-the-electorate, political science surveys have developed a continuum of **party identification** based on the question, “Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or what?”

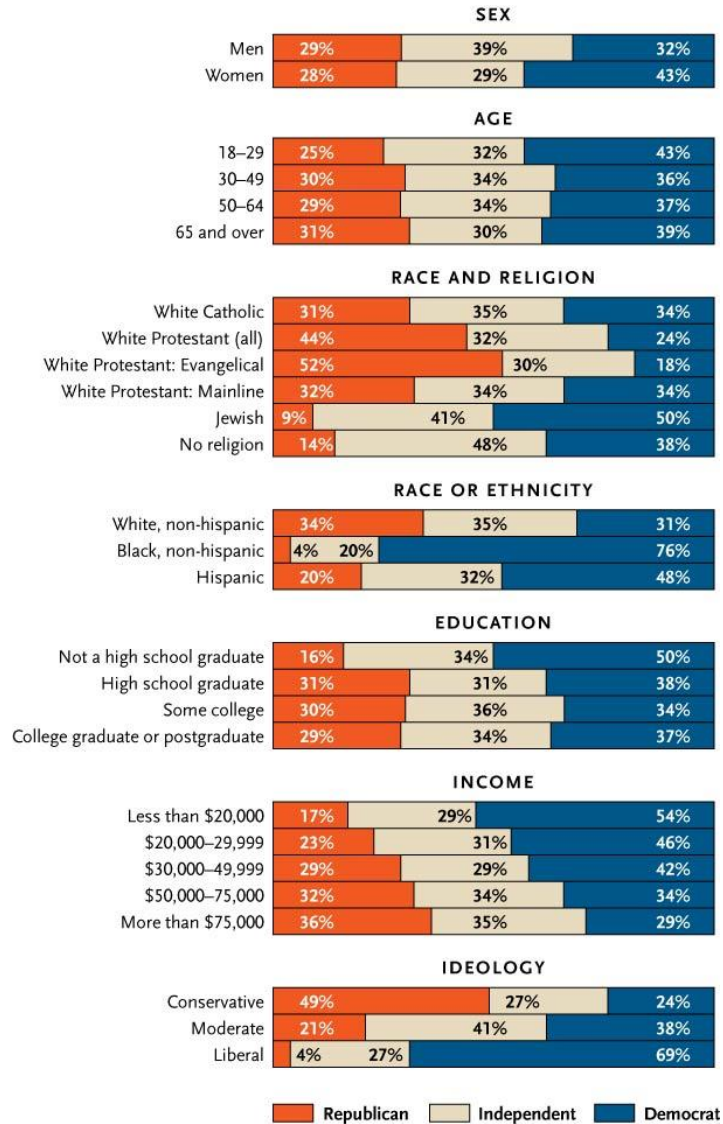
Party identification has changed significantly over time and varies by demographic group.



Americans' Party Identification



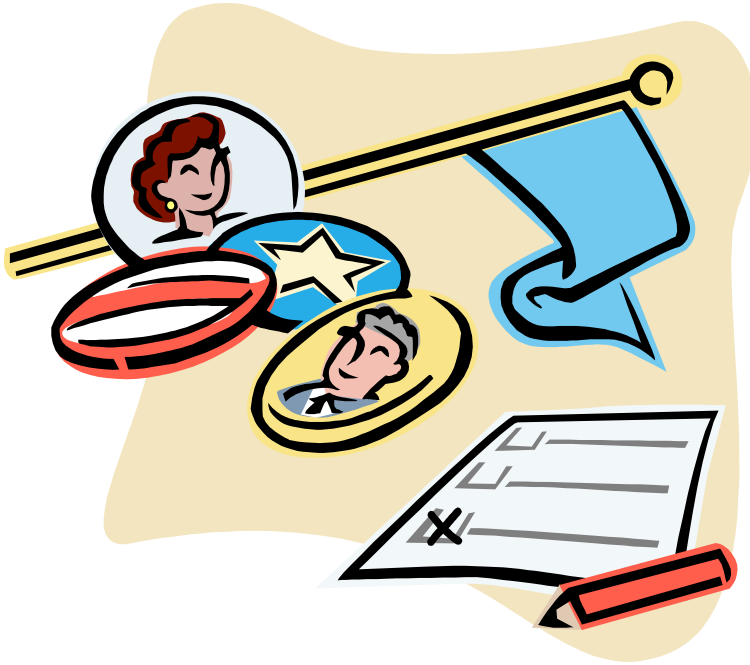
Party Identification by Social Groups, 2008



Party identifications

(Democrat, Independent, Republican) serve as the “standing decisions” for voters, and are not easily changed.

- ▶ Voter attachments to parties declined in the second half of the twentieth century as the number of Independents has increased.
- ▶ Party identifiers are less likely to vote a straight party ticket than in the past; they are more likely to reconsider their “standing decision.”



Party-as-organization refers to the formal party organizations and processes and to those aspects of political parties that exert control over, and give assistance to, candidates seeking to win office in elections.



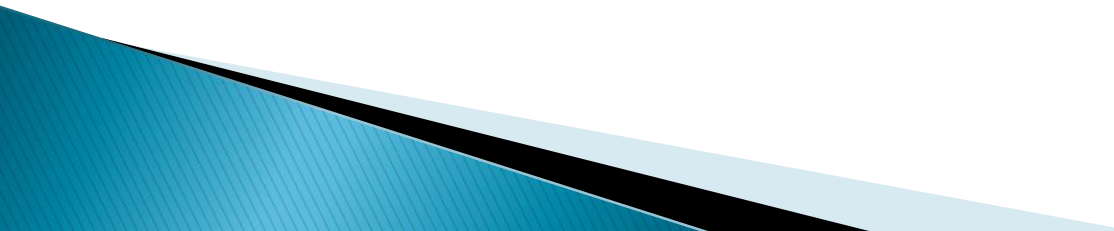
For much of the twentieth century, party-as-organization declined.

- ▶ Early in the twentieth century, parties lost control over the nomination of candidates as the “direct primary” turned control of nominations over to voters.
- ▶ Throughout the century, parties became less active and effective in running campaigns and mobilizing voters as individual candidates’ campaigns became primarily responsible for these activities.

Party-in-government refers to the ability of parties to structure and control the government.



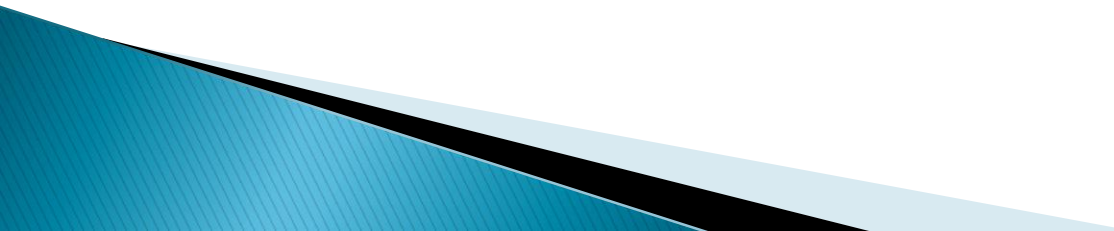
In America, party-in-government tends to be weak compared to that of other, similar democracies.

- ▶ Unlike parliamentary systems, in America control of the government can be divided between the two parties, one controlling the Congress and the other the executive;
 - ▶ In the legislative branch, American parties lack the control over the votes of their members that most parties have in parliamentary systems.
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Party Resurgence

In the last decades of the twentieth century, there was a resurgence of partisanship in the United States, in terms of both **party-as-organization** and **party-in-government**.

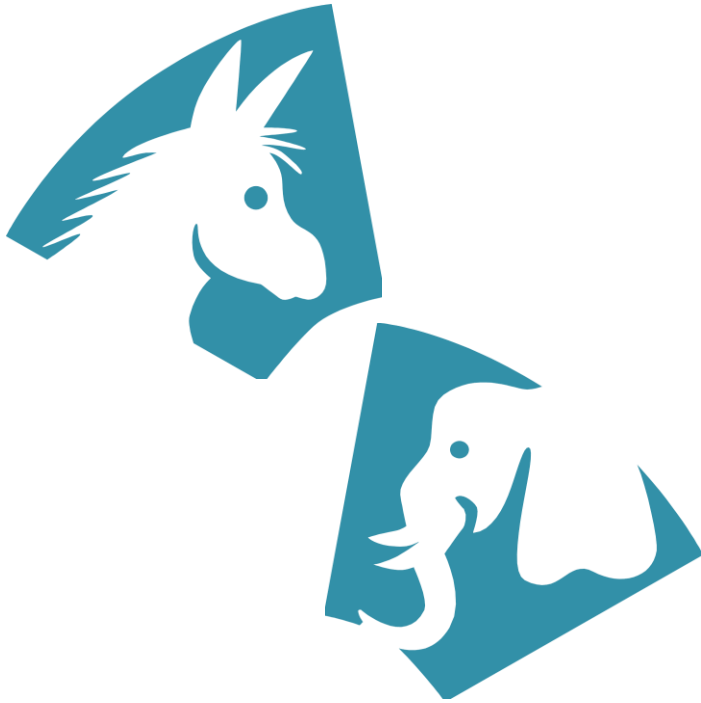
Resurgence of Party-as-Organization

- ▶ Party organizations have stepped up the campaign and fund-raising services they offer their candidates;
 - ▶ Party organizations provide their candidates with a party image or “brand name” on which they can run.
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Resurgence of Party-in-Government

- Partisanship in Congress has been on the rise since the 1980s;
- Party politicians are more likely to view themselves as part of a party “team” than in the past.

Party Competition



The notion that parties are “teams” that “market” their brand names to consumers in the electorate leads us to consider how Democrats and Republicans compete to control the government.

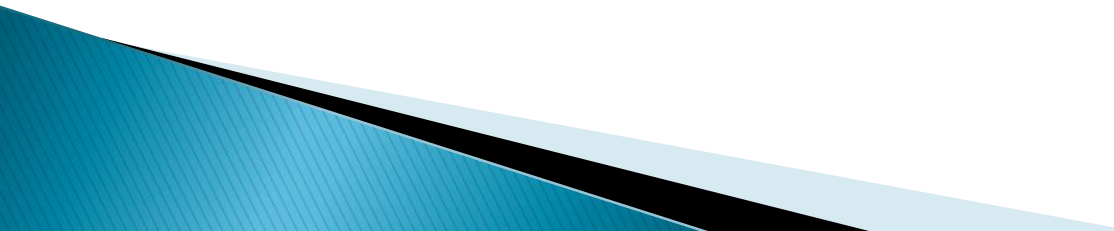
In *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Anthony Downs set forth a theory of party competition:

- ▶ Because most voters tend to be moderates, parties move to the center to attract the “median voter”;
- ▶ Thus, parties attempt to blur the ideological distinctions between themselves and the opposition.

Some argue that this strategy makes it so that there is little substantive difference between Democrats and Republicans.



Important institutional factors do encourage parties to sharpen, rather than blur, their differences.

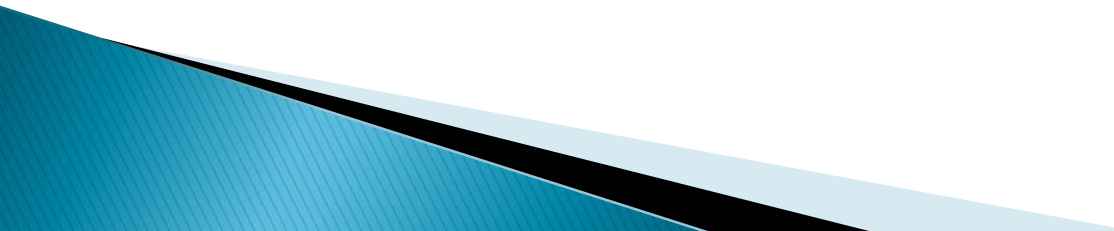
- ▶ Fund-raising and attracting campaign labor benefit from ideological appeals rather than moderation;
 - ▶ Competing in primary elections means that candidates must not just appeal to the median voter but also must appeal to the party base in order to win elections.
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Responsible Party Theory

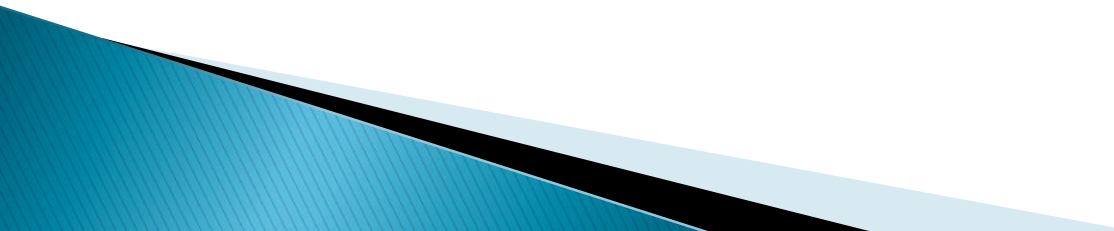
Many political scientists have a strong attachment to political parties.

In the 1940s, E. E. Schattschneider wrote, “Political parties created democracy, and . . . democracy is unthinkable save in terms of parties.”

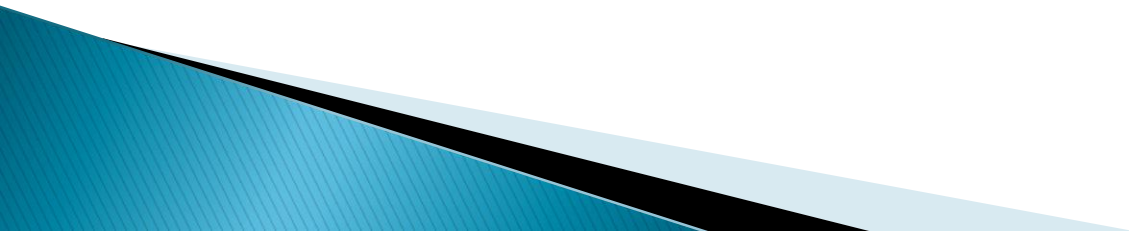
In the 1980s, Morris Fiorina wrote, “The only way collective responsibility has ever existed, and can exist given our institutions, is through the agency of the political party.”



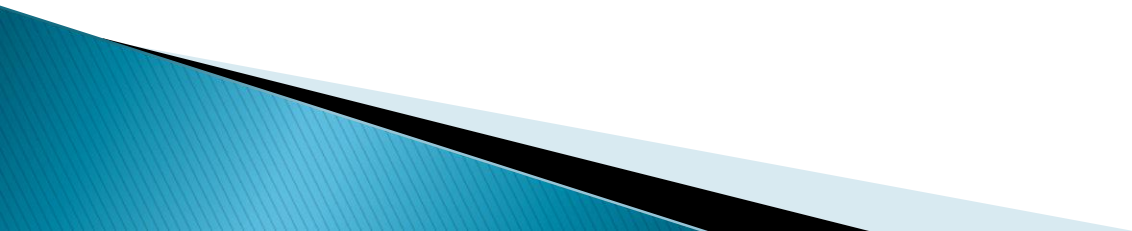
Responsible party theory requires:

- ▶ The two parties must offer the public a meaningful choice;
 - ▶ The public must make an informed choice in an election;
 - ▶ The winning party must implement its program in government;
 - ▶ The voters decide in the succeeding election whether to reward or punish the party based on its performance.
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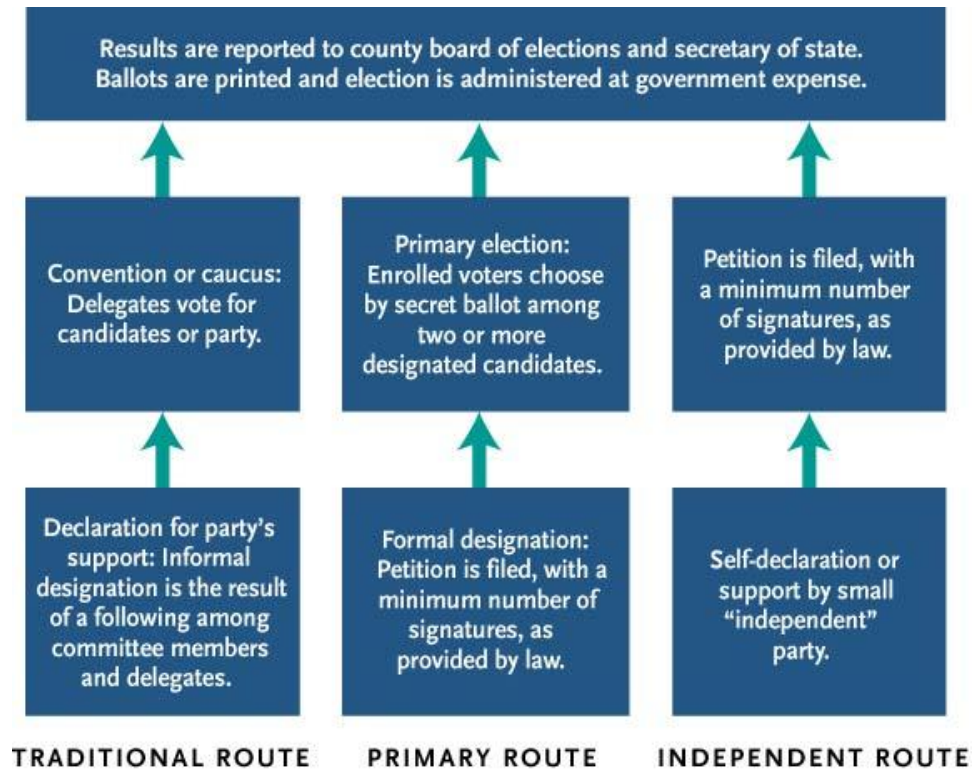
Political scientists worry about party decline because as voters make decisions about candidates rather than parties and as control of government reflects divided party control rather than unified party control, the electorate has few opportunities to hold the government accountable and foster and maintain modern democracy.



Additional Art for Chapter 11



Types of Nominating Processes



ANALYZING THE EVIDENCE

How Stable Is Party Identification?

An individual's identification with a party, Democratic or Republican, is thought to be a fundamental psychological attachment and, thus, extremely stable from year to year and election to election. Yet, as we saw in Figure 11.2. Substantial changes in the percentage of people who identify with one of the two parties do occur. Particularly large changes in party identifications occurred in the mid-1960s and the early 1980s, and between 2005 and 2008. Here lies a puzzle. If individuals' party attachments are stable, why do the aggregate percentages of people who identify with one party or the other vary so much?

Two distinct arguments are often proposed to explain this puzzle and account for broad trends in partisanship. (1) *Generational replacement* may account for the change. By this account, individual party identifications don't change much throughout one's adulthood, but the composition of the electorate changes as new generations emerge and older generations fade. (2) *Conversion* of individuals from one party to the other from one election to the next may contribute to fluctuations in aggregate trends in party attachments. It may be the case that party identification is less stable than political scientists have thought, and that people do change their party allegiances in response to immediate political choices offered by the parties and their assessments of the current president.

Political scientists measure changes in individuals' opinions and attitudes using panel surveys of the same individuals at different points in time. The Cooperative Congressional Election Study conducted an annual survey of the same 2,000 people in 2006, 2007, and 2008, a period that overlaps with the most recent significant shift in party identifications (between 2005 and 2008). The table to the right shows how people changed from 2006 to 2008. Each row of the table shows the identities of respondents in 2006. The percentages in each row show the loyalty and defection rates of those people, that is, the percent of those with a given identity in 2006 who stayed with that identity in

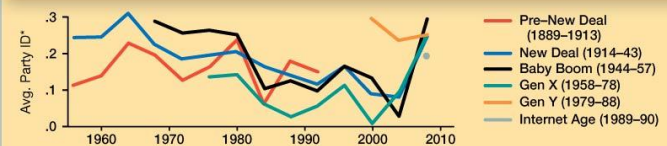
2008 or chose an alternate identification. The partisans are quite loyal, with 89 percent of Democrats and 82 percent of Republicans maintaining their loyalties. There is also very little switching between parties, and it appears to be symmetric—approximately the same percent switch from D to R as from R to D (about 3–4 percent). Most of the defection from each of the two parties is to the category of Independent, with Republicans becoming Independents at a much higher rate than Democrats (14 percent versus 8 percent). And Independents are the source of the uptick in Democratic identifications.

TRANSITIONS FROM 2006 to 2008

		2008 Party Identification		
		D	I	R
2006 Party Identification	D	89%	8%	3%
	I	20%	72%	8%
	R	4%	14%	82%

Can the decline in Republican identification between 2000 and 2008 be traced to the conversion of individuals, or is it attributed to newer, more Democratic generations replacing older, Republican generations? To answer such questions, political scientists conduct a *cohort analysis*. First, we define each generation in terms of when it came of age politically. Over the past several decades the main generations identified by social scientists are the pre-New Deal, New Deal, Baby Boom, Gen X, Gen Y, and Internet generations. Using survey data from each election (in this case, the American National Election Study), we then measure the party identification of the people in each generation, in this case, the percent Democratic minus the percent Republican. In the graph, a higher value on the vertical axis signifies more Democrats. ▼

COHORT PARTY ID, 1956–2008



*(Dem. = 1, Ind. = 0, Rep. = -1)

The generational replacement argument would predict that each generation doesn't vary in its net party attachments, because the people don't change much. We would expect each generation to be a horizontal line over time. The conversion hypothesis (in its extreme version) predicts that generations really don't differ in their baseline party attachments and that all generations show the same fluctuations in net party attachments. The graph above reveals that both arguments are in play. The generations clearly differ. The New Deal generation is consistently among the most Democratic, and Gen X is consistently among the most Republican. The net party attachments of the generations also show dramatic ups and downs, and the swings are correlated. All the generations move in the Democratic direction in Democratic years and in the Republican direction in Republican years. The Baby Boomer generation shows the most radical swings in party attachments.

Some simple calculations reveal that the changes in overall party identification in the electorate since 2000 are due to conversion. Overall, Democratic identifications minus Republican identifications rose by 18 percentage points. Consider a hypothetical change that would arise only with replacement. Suppose that the identification of each group remained as it was in 2000, but that only the composition of the electorate changed. That is, suppose that the New Deal generation shrank as a percent of the electorate and that the Gen Y and the Internet generation entered the electorate, but that the party identifications of all the generations remained as they had been in 2000. If only the composition of the electorate had changed from 2000 to 2008, then aggregate party identification would have moved 2 points in the Republican direction!

This concludes the presentation slides for Chapter 11: Political Parties

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