Chapter 9 – Political Party Realignment (Critical Periods)

**Five Major Political Party Realignments**

A period when a major lasting shift occurs in the popular coalition supporting one or both parties – many scholars argue that the process occurs gradually rather than at just one specific election time.

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| **1800** | **Jeffersonian Republicans defeated the Federalists**  Federalists were so badly defeated that they disappeared. Everyone became Republicans under Jefferson – sort of. (aka ANTI-FEDERALISTS AND DEMOCRATIC-REPUBLICANS) Federalists still hated Jefferson but his party saw no opposition up until 1824. It seemed like political parties had ceased to exist (not like modern-day Republicans – in fact the present-day Democrats look at Jefferson as the founder of their party) Jeffersonian Republicans insinuated that the Federalists were secret monarchists. |
| **1824** | **Jacksonian Democrats came to power.**  Political participation became a mass phenomenon. Jackson was the president of the “common man.” Caucus system was replaced by the national convention and members of Congress became less influential in choosing the party’s candidate. It was the first truly national system. |
| **1860**  **Clear Cut Example of Realignment** | **Whig Party collapsed – Lincoln Republicans came to power**  This was the beginning of the Republican party when several minor parties united in opposition to slavery. *Only third party to ever become a major party!* The issues of slavery and sectionalism divided both the Whigs and the Jacksonian Democrats. Anti-slavery supporters of the Union followed the Republicans for generations while those opposed to the war and in support of the Confederacy supported the Democrats. The Senate and the Presidency were easily won by Republicans for 32 years while the House usually went to the Democrats due to many northern Democrats |
| **1896** | **Republicans (William McKinley) defeated William Jennings Bryan (populist)**  Northern Republicans split into two factions – Old Guard vs Progressives. Democrats were split into Northern Democrats vs Southern Democrats Progressives wanted to reform, abolish political corruption, party bosses and patronage. This led to less accountability of candidates to their respective parties. Direct primaries, ballot initiatives, and referendums came into existence. Political parties became weaker and party lines blurred. Many Progressives switched to the Democrat Party during this period. |
| **1932** | **Democrats under Roosevelt came into power**  Democrats promised relief, recover and reform during the Great Depression. African- Americans, who had largely been loyal to the Lincoln Republicans switched allegiance to the Democrat party and have remained loyal ever since. This is the current Democrat Party of today with a large shift to the left from earlier days of the party. |