

The second party system essay



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The Second Party System is a term of periodization used by historians and political scientists to name the political system existing in the United States from about 1837 to 1852.

The system was characterized by rapidly rising levels of voter interest beginning in 1828, as demonstrated by election day turnout, rallies, partisan newspapers, and a high degree of personal loyalty to party. The origins of the second party system may be traced back from the 1824 presidential election, when there were no political parties and the race came down to four candidates. Jackson, despite having won the most popular votes and the most electoral votes, was not elected, instead, John Quincy Adams won the election through negotiations courtesy of Henry Clay which he immediately appointed as Secretary of State. Jackson loudly denounced the "corrupt bargain."

" and started campaigning vigorously, and appealing both to local militia companies and to state political factions, Jackson assembled a coalition, the embryonic Democratic Party, that ousted Adams in 1828. The Second Party System came about primarily because of Jackson's determination to destroy the Second Bank of the United States. Jackson did not like any banks; he condemned paper money and believed that only gold and silver should circulate. Jackson eventually broke the Second Bank of the United States and slowly turned against other banks.

Also during his tenure, the nullification crisis occurred which brought about the Whigs. The Whigs are anti-Jackson supporters composed of economic modernizers, bankers, businessmen, commercial farmers, and Southern

planters angry at Jackson's handling of the nullification crisis. The latter stages of the Second Party System were filled with expansion and debates between the Whigs and Jackson's party who called themselves Democrats. During the Second Party System, the United States experienced Democratization. For the first time, politics assumed a central role in voters' lives.

Before then deference to upper class elites, and general indifference most of the time, characterized local politics across the country. The suffrage laws were not at fault for they allowed mass participation; rather few men were interested in politics before 1828, and fewer still voted or became engaged because politics did not seem important. Changed followed the 1828 election of Andrew Jackson, with his charismatic personality and controversial policies. By 1840, the revolution was complete, campaigns were characterized by appeals to the common man, mass meetings, parades, celebrations, and intense enthusiasm, while elections generated high voter participation.

Unity and party loyalty are needed for a political party to rule and to ensure the harmony of state policies. The lack of these traits is main weakness of the Whigs that made them suitable only as opposition candidates. This is shown by policies of the Presidents they have produced: William Henry Harrison during his short tenure had disagreed with fellow Whig Henry Clay over the necessity of a special session and Zachary Taylor was not inclined to be a puppet of Whig leaders in Congress and took a moderate stance on the territorial expansion of slavery, angering fellow Southerners. This is the same reason why national party leaders seek to ignore, evade, or `gag`

divisive sectional issues like slavery. The disunity of the Whigs was best exemplified by its inability to take a position on slavery. As a coalition of Northern National Republicans and Southern Nullifiers, Whigs in each of the two regions held opposing views on slavery.

Only when there are no divisive issues raised can the Whigs able to conduct successful campaigns. Finally, the rise of the Republican party destabilized national politics and led to disunion. This new party, composed of former Whigs, Northern Democrats, and Free-Soilers was created as an act of defiance against the powerful class of slaveholders who were conspiring to control the federal government and to spread slavery nationwide. Because of emergence of the Republican party, supporters of both Democrats and Whigs were in disarray as to which faction to support and eventually caused the fall of party loyalty.