

# **The Evolution of the Democratic Party, 1828-2008**

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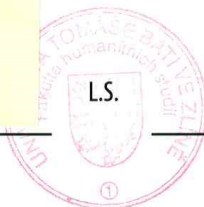
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## **ABSTRAKT**

Táto bakalárska práca sa zaoberá komplexnou a chronologickou postupnosťou vývoja demokratickej strany Spojených štátov amerických od roku 1828 po rok 2008. Toto časové rozmedzie signalizuje dôležitý transformačný proces demokratickej strany z počiatkov jej existencie až po jej moderný formát. Práca sa taktiež zaoberá významnými predstaviteľmi strany a kombinuje jej vývojové míľniky s časovou líniou historických udalostí, ktoré vývoj strany značne ovplyvnili. Cieľom tejto bakalárskej práce je objektívne identifikovať faktory, ktoré prispeli ku komplexnému vývoju a k zmenám demokratickej strany na formát, aký rozoznávame v súčasnej modernej dobe.

Kľúčové slová: demokratická strana, Spojené štáty americké, americká história, juh, otroctvo, rasizmus, moderná demokracia, progresivizmus, liberalizmus.

## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor's thesis deals with the complex and chronological sequence of the evolution of the Democratic Party in the United States of America from 1828 to 2008. This time frame indicates an essential transformation process of the Democratic Party from its beginnings to its modern format. The thesis also deals with notable leaders of the party, and combines its evolutionary milestones with a timeline of historical events that significantly influenced the development of the party. This bachelor's thesis aims to identify the factors contributing to the complex development and changes of the Democratic Party to the format we recognize in modern times.

Keywords: Democratic Party, United States of America, American history, South, slavery, racism, Modern Democracy, progressivism, liberalism.

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## INTRODUCTION

*“Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past are certain to miss the future”<sup>1</sup>*

*John F. Kennedy ~ June 26, 1963*

This thesis aims to investigate and clarify the matter, who are the Democrats, where are the roots of democratic ideology and its values, and mainly, how these values evolved over the years.

Since the party's establishment, unto the Antebellum era, the Democratic Party was chiefly a party of Southerners, while almost every member of the party was a slave owner. Nevertheless, during the current modern times, the Democratic Party is the symbol of progressivism and liberalism. Although, when did these radical transitions took place? These progressive concepts were implemented during the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the Democratic Party shifted its programs towards modern society. However, on the contrary, the Democratic Party during the era of the Young America Movement placed a top priority on the pursuit of Manifest Destiny, which could be accomplished primarily through hard work and labor. Nevertheless, the desire to fulfill one's destiny is closely linked to the “obscured past” of Democrats, or in other words, to racist and pro-slavery ideology.

The popularity of Democrats fluctuated over time; however, it deteriorated due to many events, such as ideological inconsistency within the party or when Democrats experienced an identity crisis. What happened to the Democratic identity? The Democratic Party portrays a fundamental institutional change within its values and ideologies, considering the influence of many features such as race, religion or gender equality. Nevertheless, the situation was not always like this.

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<sup>1</sup> Good Reads, “A quote by John F. Kennedy,” accessed May 03, 2021, <https://www.good-reads.com/quotes/159557-change-is-the-law-of-life-and-those-who-look>.

The Democratic Party began its journey throughout the Jacksonian democracy, when the party evolved into a “party of a common man,” supporting slavery and the Indian removal. However, the crucial question regarding the end of slavery eventually led to the ideological conflict within the party members. During the 1860s, the unresolved issues caused Democrats an existential crisis and the need to re-identify the values and approaches of the party. However, as was the American nation evolving, the progression of political institutions followed, which eventually propelled Democrats to adjust their traditional partisan values. The Democratic Party started series of progressive political concepts during the administration of Woodrow Wilson, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, followed by Kennedy’s and Johnson’s presidency, which eventually culminated and began to perform centrist approaches during the era of Bill Clinton. The symbol of modern Democratic ideology shifted to its peak during Obama’s administration and denoted how much of an open-minded journey Democratic Party overtook over the years.

Thus, this thesis aims to identify and understand factors that contributed to the gradual development and changes of the initial format of the Democratic Party and eventually created the modern concept of the party. At last, this thesis will demonstrate the importance of fighting for progress and how beneficial it was for Democrats to understand, that it was necessary to look to the future rather than be inspired by the founding fathers administration.

## 1 BACKGROUND

The emergence of the U.S. Democratic Party in the 1820s was the result of long-term and complex events. It began in the 1790s with President George Washington's ideologically divided cabinet, whose differences naturally led them to coalesce into the country's first two political parties, the Democratic Republicans and Federalists.

In 1792, Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson, the founder of the Democratic Republican Party, favoured an agrarian republic with a weak central government. His opponent, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton, founded the Federalists, whose vision for the fledgling United States was one of industrialization and a strong central government.<sup>2</sup> The two parties also harboured different views on economic and foreign policy, as well as on the interpretation of the *Constitution*.

At the end of Washington's second and final term, the twelfth amendment had not yet been ratified, so the candidate with the most votes became president and the candidate with the second largest vote count won the post of vice president. As a result, in the 1796 election, John Adams, a Federalist, was elected president, while the vice presidency went to Jefferson. Although Adams and Jefferson were able to put their ideological differences aside to pass several key laws, such as the Alien and Sedition Acts,<sup>3</sup> they generally did not see eye to eye, prompting Jefferson to decide to run against Adams in 1800. The resulting "dirty campaign" of 1800 ended with Jefferson's victory and the first peaceful transition of power between opposing parties.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Heather Lehr Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party* (New York: Chelsea House, 2007), 9-11.

<sup>3</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Kerwin Swint, "Founding Fathers' Dirty Campaign," CNN (Cable News Network), accessed April 7, 2021, <https://edition.cnn.com/2008/LIVING/wayoflife/08/22/mf.campaign.slurs.slogans/>.

During Jefferson's presidency, he adopted the spoils system and removed Federalists from political jobs in favour of representatives of his own party.<sup>5</sup> He reduced military expenditures, placed an embargo on European goods, and eliminated the whisky tax, which had plagued farmers for a decade.<sup>6</sup> Also, in pursuit of his agrarian vision, he doubled the size of the United States through the 1803 purchase of Louisiana Territory from France.

Jefferson, honouring the tradition established by Washington, decided not to run for a third term. He did, however, hand pick his political successor, James Madison, who went on to easily defeat the Federalist presidential candidate in 1808. Madison would serve two terms, during which he led the United States into a second war against Great Britain. During the so-called War of 1812, which actually lasted until 1814, the British navy attacked Washington D.C. and burned down the White House and Capitol.<sup>7</sup> It was also at the end of this war that General Andrew Jackson and his ragtag army of Tennessee volunteers, slaves, and free blacks defeated the British at the Battle of New Orleans.<sup>8</sup> The only real outcome of this victory (the war had already ended, unbeknownst to those involved) was the elevation of Jackson to hero status, which would certainly benefit him later.

After two presidential terms in the office, Madison gave way to James Monroe, his political successor, and the last founding father to hold the office of president. Monroe's victory not only assured at least two decades of uninterrupted rule for the Democratic Republicans but the demise of the Federalist party altogether. Monroe chose John Quincy Adams as his secretary of state, and together, they governed America through the "Era of Good

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<sup>5</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 17.

<sup>6</sup> "Monticello," Embargo of 1807, accessed April 7, 2021, <https://www.monticello.org/site/research-and-collections/embargo-1807>.

<sup>7</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 27.

<sup>8</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 27.

Feelings,” an era characterized by westward expansion,<sup>9</sup> as well as the resulting 1820 Missouri Compromise and 1823 Monroe Doctrine.<sup>10</sup>

## 1.1 The Electoral College

U.S. presidents are not elected by popular vote but rather by the Electoral College. Under this system, each state is assigned a certain number of electors/representatives who vote on behalf of the state. The number of electors is determined by a state’s number of two senators and the number of representatives, the latter of which is constantly changing due to population fluctuations. The winning party in any given election earns the right to send its representatives to Washington to cast the state’s electoral votes.<sup>11</sup> Such an action was largely *pro forma* and without incident until 1824, when the electoral college was thrust into the spotlight.

## 1.2 The Election of 1824

In 1824, John Quincy Adams, the son of the founding father and second president John Adams, ran for president against Gen. Andrew Jackson, the hero of both the War of 1812 and the First Seminole War of 1818. Neither candidate secured a sufficient number of electoral college votes to win, so the election was decided by the House of Representatives.<sup>12</sup> Adams won when Congressman Henry Clay of Kentucky gave his support to Adams in exchange for an appointment as secretary of state. This “corrupt bargain” outraged Jackson and

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<sup>9</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 29.

<sup>10</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 33.

<sup>11</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 11.34.

<sup>12</sup> “Presidential Election of 1824,” 270toWin.com, accessed April 7, 2021, [https://www.270towin.com/1824\\_Election/](https://www.270towin.com/1824_Election/).

his supporters, prompting Jackson to immediately begin campaigning for a rematch in 1828.<sup>13</sup>

As president, Adams supported a progressive economic program called the American System to modernize and boost the U.S. infrastructure. Supporters of Jackson argued that the developments were outside the federal constitutional authority.<sup>14</sup> Adams attempted to provide a western territory for the Native Americans but did not receive the support of Congress. Ultimately, the president's term was marred by, among other concerns, allegations of corruption and criticism of his unsuccessful economic policies, resulting in him losing the 1828 election to Andrew Jackson, who won the vast majority of southern and western votes by a wide margin. The Democratic Republicans would never recover.

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<sup>13</sup> Richard R. Stenberg, "Jackson, Buchanan, and the 'Corrupt Bargain' Calumny," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 58, no. 1 (1934): 61-85, accessed April 7, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20086857>.

<sup>14</sup> History.com Editors, "John Quincy Adams," accessed March 24, 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/john-quincy-adams>.

## 2 THE BEGINNING OF MODERN DEMOCRACY

### 2.1 Jacksonian Democracy

The election year of 1828 was remarkable not only because of the establishment of the Democratic Party but because it ushered in the so-called modern presidency, with the beginning of political campaigns that made use of propaganda. Such propaganda often took the form of *ad hominem* accusations, meaning a candidate attacked his opponent's behavior rather than his ideology or opinions, with the purpose of undermining the opponent's authority.<sup>15</sup> John Quincy Adams, for example, distributed the "Coffin Handbill," in which he attacked Andrew Jackson's military career and his character in the form of accusations over the mass murder of Indians during his military campaigns.<sup>16</sup> If he thought, however, that the murder of Indians would turn American voters against Jackson, he was clearly mistaken. In fact, most Americans approved of Indian removal. Moreover, they approved of Jackson himself, a "common man" who was raised in poverty by his prostitute mother but who "pulled himself up by his bootstraps" and became a self-made man, which included being a lawyer, planter, military general, and politician.

Before the 1830s, politics was dominated by the aristocracy, whose attributes included higher education, immense wealth, and high social status. Namely, for example, men such as George Washington or Thomas Jefferson ensured that voting rights were limited only to white male landowners. Such laws hinged on the idea that only white men of means should have the right to influence policy.

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<sup>15</sup> Khan Academy, "Jacksonian Democracy Part 3," accessed February 19, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GnOf2f68Sao>.

<sup>16</sup> Khan Academy, "Jacksonian Democracy Part 3."

With the birth of Jacksonian democracy, voting laws were significantly changed. Jackson shared Jefferson's vision of an agrarian republic populated by self-sufficient land owners,<sup>17</sup> and he handed federal jobs positions to those who supported his political ideology. These supporters in turn desired to extend suffrage to all white male citizens over the age of 21, irrespective of land ownership.<sup>18</sup> The problem with this was that there were many more white men in the North than in the South. However, after the Missouri Compromise of 1820, the South was expanding west at great speed, and it was the hope of Jacksonian Democrats that this expansion would increase the white Southern population until it was on par with that of the North.<sup>19</sup>

### 2.1.1 Spoils system

During the presidency of Andrew Jackson, Democrats were represented as the "party of the common man," specifically, the party of white men. Alongside the Jacksonian democracy, the White House opened to the public for the first time in history, signaling that the president was ready to serve the nation. Nevertheless, the bureaucratic procedure of the spoils system contradicted the publicly presented status of the "common man party." The spoils system was a crucial aspect of Jacksonian democracy, rewarding Democratic supporters and voters with political positions.<sup>20</sup> In other words, officials of previous parties were gradually replaced by purely Democratically-minded officials.<sup>21</sup>

The concept of the spoils system became a powerful tool for enhancing political involvement. The spoils system anticipated that if governmental positions were filled with the

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<sup>17</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 40.

<sup>18</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 39.

<sup>19</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 32.

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Feller, "Andrew Jackson: Domestic Affairs," Miller Center, accessed April 06, 2021, <https://miller-center.org/president/jackson/domestic-affairs>.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Grier Sellers, "Andrew Jackson Versus the Historians," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 44, no. 4 (1958): 615-34. Accessed April 5, 2021.



party's supporters, the party would achieve more effective results and motivate supporters to stay in the party. Although the idea of more effective party results may seem beneficial, the spoils system met with tremendous public criticism, especially from the opposing party supporters.<sup>22</sup> Andrew Jackson, for his part, broke his campaign promise to fight corruption when he replaced competent office workers with the party's unqualified supporters.

### 2.1.2 The bank war

The Bank of the United States was established by President George Washington and Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury, in 1791.<sup>23</sup> With the bank's establishment came heated debates over its constitutionality and whether or not it was an effective expansion of federal power. After Congress allowed the bank, President Washington gave it a twenty-year charter, during which it was used as the primary source of government debt and military spending. The original charter ended in 1816, resulting in the establishment of the Second National Bank, also given a twenty-year charter. This bank had branches in every state, the profits of which were taxed by the state. The issue of bank taxation was challenged in the *McCulloch vs. Maryland* Supreme Court case in 1819, which declared the taxation unconstitutional; because the bank was a national bank, it was not subject to taxation.<sup>24</sup> The primary purpose of the Second National Bank was to hold federal funds. When Andrew Jackson was reelected in 1832, he used his executive power to liquidate all federal funds. And when the charter of the Second National bank expired in 1836, Jackson vetoed the creation of a Third National Bank on the grounds that the national bank was a concentrated

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<sup>22</sup> Eric J. Irungu, "The Spoils System," accessed April 6, 2021, [https://www.academia.edu/6489592/The\\_Spoils\\_System](https://www.academia.edu/6489592/The_Spoils_System).

<sup>23</sup> History.com Editors, "Bank of the United States," accessed April 6, 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/us-government/bank-of-the-united-states>.

<sup>24</sup> "US history I (AY Collection)," accessed February 20, 2021, <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-ushistory1ay/chapter/the-bank-war/>.

economic power regulated by monopolists, investors, and the wealthy.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, the United States would have no national bank for the next seven decades, until the Federal Reserve System was created.<sup>26</sup>

### 2.1.3 The Indian Removal Act and the Trail of Tears

Thomas Jefferson believed and proposed that Indian tribes needed to be relocated from the East to the West. President George Washington, on the other hand, encouraged the assimilation of Indians into American society. Washington wanted Indians to deliberately adapt white customs and behaviors. He also wanted them to become civilized, English-speaking Christians. Of the two, President Andrew Jackson sided with Jefferson, preferring removal.

Some tribes in the U.S. South tried to become “civilized” and assimilate into white society, via English language proficiency, Christian practices and even slave ownership.<sup>27</sup> These tribes, which came to be known as the “five civilized tribes,” included the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, Creek, and Cherokee.<sup>28</sup> The problem for these tribes was that they owned huge swaths of land whites coveted. In 1830, President Jackson signed a law giving the U.S. government authority to exchange Indian lands east of the Mississippi River with those west of the river. The Indian Removal Act allowed the legal displacement of the five civilized tribes.

The responses from the Indian tribes differed. The Chickasaw cooperated with the government, and rather than being forcibly displaced to the Indian Territory, they moved

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<sup>25</sup> “Andrew Jackson & The Bank Wars: BRI’s AP U.S. History Exam Study Guide,” accessed February 17, 2021, [https://youtu.be/\\_ObdJL-hUK8](https://youtu.be/_ObdJL-hUK8).

<sup>26</sup> H. Bodenhorn and G. Fisher, “The Jacksonian Economy,” accessed February 17, 2021, <https://www.eh.net/?s=THE%2Bjacksonian>.

<sup>27</sup> History.com Editors, “Trail of Tears,” accessed February 22, 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/trail-of-tears>.

<sup>28</sup> G. Foreman and J.R. Swanton, *The Five Civilized Tribes: Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), 17-18.

voluntarily. The Creek rebelled in 1836, to which the U.S. government responded with violent force; the Creek were moved west in chains.<sup>29</sup> The Cherokee were the most assimilated tribe, wearing American dress and creating their own written language, which they used to write their own constitution in 1827. When the Indian Removal Act was passed, they challenged it in court. Even though the U.S. Supreme Court ultimately sided with the Cherokee, Jackson ordered the military to remove the Cherokee anyway, resulting in the Trail of Tears, a 500-mile forced march west during which over 4,000 Cherokee died.<sup>30</sup>

#### 2.1.4 Martin Van Buren

In the presidential elections of 1837, Jackson's vice president, was Martin Van Buren of New York, was elected as the 8<sup>th</sup> president of the United States and the 2<sup>nd</sup> president from the Democratic Party.<sup>31</sup> As president, Van Buren was dedicated to preserving the national government's financial stability. And unlike his predecessor, Van Buren opposed the extension of slavery into the western territories.<sup>32</sup>

#### 2.1.5 Panic of 1837

The 1837 panic was a massive economic collapse sometimes referred to as America's first great depression. The panic was probably the result of Jackson's economic policies, which included the expansion of paper money in an inadequately supervised banking sector that was flooded with government deposits following the demise of the Second National Bank.<sup>33</sup> Another contributing factor was the specie circular policy, which required payment for government lands exclusively by specie, predominantly gold or silver. Van

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<sup>29</sup> Bruce R. Bartlett, *Wrong on Race* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 9.

<sup>30</sup> "History Brief: Indian Removal," Reading through History, accessed February 17, 2021, Video, 2:05- 5:45, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8Hd42J-tzs>.

<sup>31</sup> "Martin Van Buren: Presidents," White House, accessed February 20, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/martin-van-buren>.

<sup>32</sup> "Annexation," TSHA, accessed April 7, 2021, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/annexation>.

<sup>33</sup> Peter L. Rousseau, "Jacksonian Monetary Policy, Specie Flows, and the Panic of 1837," *Journal of Economic History* 62, no. 2 (2002): 457-88, Accessed April 7, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2698187>.

Buren worsened the situation by continuing Jackson's economic policies. As a result, the panic of 1837 led to an economic depression that lasted 5 years, or the entire time of Van Buren's presidency.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> "US History I (AY Collection)," accessed February 20, 2021, <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-ushistory1ay/chapter/the-bank-war/>.

### 3 THE QUESTION OF SLAVERY

The 11<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, James K. Polk, was a protégé of Andrew Jackson and a firm believer in Jacksonian democracy. His primary goal was the fulfillment of Manifest Destiny. To these ends, he purchased Oregon from Great Britain, annexed Texas, and waged a war with Mexico, the result of which was the acquisition of California, Arizona and New Mexico.<sup>35</sup> Debates immediately arose over whether these newly acquired territories would be slave or free. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 dictated that any territory south of the 36<sup>th</sup> parallel would be slave territory, but the parallel divided California, which desired to enter the union as a single state.

#### 3.1 The Compromise of 1850

The predominant issue concerning the newly acquired western territories was whether they would be slave or free. Up to that point, America was comprised of thirty states, half of which were slave states. In spring 1850, Kentucky congressman Henry Clay presented a compromise to the Senate with the hope of maintaining the equilibrium between North and South.<sup>36</sup> In June, it passed. As a result, California was admitted as a free state, the slave trade was abolished in the nation's capital, and the identity of New Mexico and Arizona would be decided by popular sovereignty.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> History.com Editors. "James K. Polk," accessed March 01, 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/james-polk>.

<sup>36</sup> Yonatan Eyal, *The Young America Movement and the Transformation of the Democratic Party: 1828-61* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 219; "The Compromise of 1850," Bill of Rights Institute, accessed April 7, 2021, <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/essays/the-compromise-of-1850>.

<sup>37</sup> MOOC | The Compromise of 1850 | The Civil War and Reconstruction, 1850-1861 | 1.4.4, YouTube (YouTube, 2014), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dwralA6-yHM>.

### 3.2 The Kansas-Nebraska Act

After several peaceful years following the 1850 Compromise, Democratic Senator Stephan Douglas introduced a bill aimed to re-organize western territory, known as the Kansas Nebraska Act.<sup>38</sup> The bill would provide for westward expansion with the further vision of building a transcontinental railroad. However, the bill outraged the abolitionist movement because it would most likely declare the extension of slavery to those states where it had been once outlawed. As a the result, the Kansas-Nebraska Act became the most polarizing law ever passed by Congress.<sup>39</sup>

Some Democrats produced a political manifest that labelled the bill as a “gross violation of sacred pledge.”<sup>40</sup> In other words, they criticised the bill as a tool that will eventually expand slavery to all states. Despite their disapproval, the Senate proclaimed the bill as valid, while the pro-slavery Democrats viewed it as a safe and sound solution to slavery. After Congress ratified the bill and the president signed it into law, Kansas and Nebraska became new territories with popular sovereignty, meaning the existence of slavery in the territories would be decided by a popular vote. What Congress did not realize is that Americans were so excited over the issue of slavery that they were willing to move to Kansas and Nebraska just so they could vote. The result of so many polarized Americans in one place “Bleeding Kansas,” a series of skirmishes among the opposing factions during which 55 Americans were killed.

The Kansas-Nebraska act divided Democrats into two fractions, Northern Abolitionists and Pro-Slavery Southerners. This division culminated into separate Democratic presidential

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<sup>38</sup> Smith, Theodore C., *Parties And Slavery* (New York: Negro University Press, 1969), 94.

<sup>39</sup> Jules Witcover, *Party of the People: A History of The Democrats* (New York: Random House, 2003), 221.

<sup>40</sup> Witcover, *Party of the People: A History of The Democrats*, 194.

candidates, resulting in the 1860 presidential election being won by Abraham Lincoln, the candidate of lately established Republican Party.<sup>41</sup>

### 3.3 Civil war

The Antebellum era was associated with the developing abolitionism and an ideological debate over slavery. During the era, the economy of the country gradually shifted to the North as the result of the Industrial Revolution, while at the same time, the South was experiencing a prosperous boom in cotton planting.<sup>42</sup> The spread of American individualism and as well as of Manifest Destiny were both the causes and products of Western expansion. The Civil War arose from the abolitionist sentiment in the North, related to westward expansion. During the presidency of James Buchanan, the first actions related to Southern secession started to appear. A secession-friendly motion implemented ingenious sophism, a mechanism of logical initiatives that would eventually destroy the Union. Sophism means that any state can lawfully and continuously withdraw from the Union.<sup>43</sup> In 1861, 10 Southern states followed South Carolina out of the Union, desiring to form an independent constitutional unit called the Confederate States of America and adopted their provisional constitution.<sup>44</sup> Peace Democrats opposed the war and supported the compromise, while War Democrats favoured slavery and objected to the Republican economic policies and the revocation of civil rights by President Abraham Lincoln.

Later in 1862, Lincoln announced his Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that all the slaves in the Confederate states were, after January 1, 1863, forever free.<sup>45</sup> At the end of the

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<sup>41</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 59.

<sup>42</sup> “Antebellum Period,” HistoryNet, accessed April 8, 2021, <https://www.historynet.com/antebellum-period>.

<sup>43</sup> Horwitz, Joshua, and Casey Anderson. “THE CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION.” In *Guns, Democracy, and the Insurrectionist Idea*, 118-36. ANN ARBOR: University of Michigan Press, 2009. Accessed April 8, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> Witcover, *Party of the People: a History of the Democrats*, 213.

<sup>45</sup> Witcover, *Party of the People: a History of the Democrats*, 220.

war in 1865, Southerners were devastated after Lincoln delivered his speech in which he proposed that blacks, now free, deserve the right to vote. Three days after the speech, president Lincoln was assassinated. After the assassination, the vice president, Andrew Johnson, succeeded the presidency and announced his reconstruction plans. after Lincoln's assassination in 1865.

Redemption began in 1874, when the Democrats finally entered the House of Representatives after it was agreed to end the Reconstruction era as a result of an economic recession of 1873.<sup>46</sup> The Democrats selected Governor Samuel Tilden as their presidential candidate in the 1876 elections, opposing Rutherford B. Hayes. Tilden appeared as a leader of popular votes, nevertheless, the Republicans refused to concede defeat and blamed Democratic supporters for bribing the black voters in Florida, Louisiana and South Carolina.<sup>47</sup> An electoral commission was organized to resolve the dispute. With the bilateral agreement that the Republican Party would withdraw all federal troops from the South to enhance the democratic institutions in the area while still respecting black political rights, the Democrats accepted Hayes' victory. The 1877 Compromise represented a settlement of the 1876 presidential elections between Southern Democrats and Republicans represented by Rutherford Hayes while being also the ending milestone of the Reconstruction era.<sup>48</sup> The assurances of the Southern Democrats to defend the civil and political rights of the blacks were hollow, and the termination of federal influence in the South led to a massive rebellion by the Black electorate. Instead, various bills requiring whites to be segregated from blacks in public

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<sup>46</sup> Robert Mitchell, "The First Midterm 'Wave' Election That Ended Total Republican Control of Government," *The Washington Post* accessed April 09, 2021, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/history/2018/11/04/midterm-wave-election-that-set-standard-them-all/>.

<sup>47</sup> History.com Editors. "Compromise of 1877," accessed March 15, 2021, <https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/compromise-of-1877>.



transportation, schools, parks, restaurants, theatres and other places were ratified in the 1880s.

## 4 PROGRESSIVISM OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

After the absence of the Democratic president in the White House for 24 years, the Democratic Party started its re-identification approaches and discovered a new target group of voters. Democrats started to recruit workers and immigrants in exchange for their votes and equipped workers with healthcare and job positions.<sup>49</sup> Notwithstanding the disgraceful allegations, Democratic nominee Grover Cleveland won the presidential election of 1884 against his Republican opponent James G. Blaine. Cleveland's success could be determined not only by the support of political Mugwumps, the Republican political activists who preferred to support Democratic nominees rather than their party's candidate,<sup>50</sup> but also by the close majority of electoral votes Cleveland obtained. After his inauguration, Cleveland was the first president who served in office for two non-consecutive terms, which gave Cleveland the status of the 22nd and 24th president of the United States. More precisely, he was the first Democratic president elected after the lengthy Republican dominance.

### 4.1 The Panic of 1893

After President's Cleveland first term in the office, his popularity was slowly declining after he vetoed the Dependent Pension Bill in 1887.<sup>51</sup> Cleveland established the Interstate Commerce act in 1887, declaring that the railroads would be under federal regulation, which demanded the railroads to return 81,000,000 acres of land from the Western states.<sup>52</sup> Since the act, the national economy grew much more integrated, making almost all Commerce

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<sup>49</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 62.

<sup>50</sup> "Mugwump," Merriam-Webster (Merriam-Webster), accessed April 7, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mugwump>.

<sup>51</sup> "The Life and Presidency of Grover Cleveland," WHHA, accessed April 9, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse-history.org/the-life-and-presidency-of-grover-cleveland>.

<sup>52</sup> "Grover Cleveland," WHHA, accessed April 9, 2021, <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/bios/grover-cleveland>.

interstate and international.<sup>53</sup> Cleveland was defeated after his first term in office by the Republican opponent, Benjamin Harrison, when Cleveland failed due to a shortage of electoral votes. After the presidency of Benjamin Harrison, Cleveland was nominated as the 24th president in the election of 1892, where he succeeded and began his second presidential period in non-consecutive terms.<sup>54</sup>

The Gilded age's economic and political situation seemed to work until the Panic of New York Stock Exchange 1893 outbreak. The Panic was characterized as one of the worst economic depressions, which significantly contributed to most banks and railroad companies bankruptcy declaration. The economic policies of Grover Cleveland generated financial instability, which was caused by two significant effects. Firstly, the gold standard was closely tied with the collapse of gold reserves and, secondly, the slowed economic activity which contributed to the panic. As the economy experienced recession, Banks balance sheets decreased, which led to the nationwide credit crisis and therefore prompted the withdrawal of public funds and savings.<sup>55</sup> Yet, Cleveland's stubbornness to substitute Gold Standard monetary policy to Silver Standard, caused the deterioration of Democratic Party supporters all over the country.

The Panic desolated the American economy until the gold appearance, discovered in Klondike, Yukon. On the one hand, the Goldrush caused an economic rebirth of many states, but on the other, the great migration of crowds devastated the local ecosystem. In the presidential elections of 1896, Democrats nominated William Jennings Bryan, who supported the

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<sup>53</sup> "The Interstate Commerce Act Is Passed," U.S. Senate: The Interstate Commerce Act Is Passed, December 12, 2019, [https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Interstate\\_Commerce\\_Act\\_Is\\_Passed.htm](https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Interstate_Commerce_Act_Is_Passed.htm).

<sup>54</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 64.

<sup>55</sup> Gary Richardson and Tim Sablik, "Banking Panics of the Gilded Age," Federal Reserve History, accessed April 7, 2021, <https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/banking-panics-of-the-gilded-age>.

Free Silver Movement, which might enable silver coinage of 16 silver ounces at a price equivalent that would equal to one gold ounce.<sup>56</sup>

After Bryan successfully delivered the speech called the, “Cross of gold” to the National Convention of the Democratic Party in 1896,<sup>57</sup> he became a demanded Democratic nominee throughout several election terms. Despite Bryan’s seeming popularity among voters, Democrats failed to infiltrate into the White House for 19 years until the Republican lead Theodore Roosevelt formed his party, called The Progressive Party or also known as the Moose Party.<sup>58</sup> The internal division of the Republican Party was a prominent chance for the Democrats to strike again to the White House, having Woodrow Wilson as their next presidential front-runner.

## 4.2 Re-shaping Democratic Party

When Woodrow Wilson accessed the White House, most of the policies created during the 19th century started to diminish, parties became the subject of criticism by political reformers, and the assault on party power became the strategy for countering economic power.<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, there were still some party loyalists, however; the anti-partisan attitude extended. Political institutions, therefore, needed to try harder to persuade voters that they are the right choice. Democratic efforts of the 19th century were formed to embrace and appreciate the tradition. On the other hand, the awareness of political and social progress shifted in Democratic campaigns throughout the 20th-century, implied that it was necessary to look to the future rather than be inspired by the administration of the founding fathers.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Rockoff, Hugh. “The “Wizard of Oz” as a Monetary Allegory,” *Journal of Political Economy* 98, no. 4 (1990): 739-60, accessed April 9, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2937766>.

<sup>57</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 64.

<sup>58</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 65.

<sup>59</sup> Alan Ware, *The Democratic Party Heads North, 1877-1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006),139.

<sup>60</sup> Ware, *The Democratic Party Heads North, 1877-1962*, 141.

#### 4.2.1 Woodrow Wilson

Democratic presidential nominee, Woodrow Wilson, became the 28th president during the 1912 presidential election. Wilson managed to take advantage of the internal division of the Republicans and persuaded society that Democrats were the progressive ones, which eventually helped him achieve presidential status and eventually formed the grounds for America to become today's modern geopolitical capacity. Wilson claimed that to protect widely appreciated economic and political liberties, the government would need to have a more significant impact on the lives of Americans. President remained a solid approach within the domestic policy, which could be observed in forming the Federal Reserve's system and Federal Trade Commission. Nevertheless, he advocated policies that remained contradictory with the progressive ideology of the Democrats, such as his supportive program of the Segregation of Federal Departments in 1913.<sup>61</sup> Throughout his administration, Wilson declared a war status with Germany during the First World War, declaring that "the world must be safe for democracy."<sup>62</sup>

World War I forced women to be employed in the men like occupations. However, the fact that women were exerting in the factories served as a wake-up call to argue that women deserve voting suffrage just as any other working men. Woodrow Wilson gave full support to the women suffrage movement and implemented a constitutional amendment in 1918 to secure it.<sup>63</sup> Following the end of the war, President Wilson signed the Versailles treaty that officially declared the end of the war. Remaining Wilson's ambitious pacifistic approaches, he desired to get approved his post-war agenda called the League of Nations, which wasn't

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<sup>61</sup> Ken Gormley, *The Presidents and the Constitution* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 361.

<sup>62</sup> Gormley, *The Presidents and the Constitution*, 362.

<sup>63</sup> Gormley, *The Presidents and the Constitution*, 366.

eventually ratified by the Congress and therefore, the U.S.A did not become a member of the program.<sup>64</sup>

#### 4.2.2 The New Deal

After Woodrow Wilson's presidency, the White House was filled with the three Republican administrations supporting the laissez-faire attitudes. The period of the Roaring twenties, in which the economy expanded rapidly, resulted in the New York Stock market reaching its peak in 1929. The Wall Street Crash, also recognized by the terms Black Thursday, Black Monday, and Black Tuesday, are events that led to the Great Depression in the 1930s.<sup>65</sup> However, the consequence of the collapse has a broader picture. The crash demonstrated the need for the necessary rethinking of policies directed at financial liberalization.<sup>66</sup>

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt run for the prime time in the presidential elections as a governor just before the economy collapsed, he was defeated by a Republican, Herbert Hoover. However, in 1933, Franklin Delano Roosevelt won the presidency and started the era of 20-year Democratic supremacy in the White House. Since the Civil War, the Roosevelt's administration was the first one that maintained the dominance of the Democratic Party in the United States. During his first administrative term, Roosevelt started to implement his legislative efforts to convalesce the economy after the depression, called the New Deal.

FDR launched multiple new policies that helped to improve the alarming consequence of the post-depression issues that the nation was confronted by—provided bank stabilisation and economic recovery, increased employment and income boost, and created a sense of

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<sup>64</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 67.

<sup>65</sup> Olivia B. Waxman, "What Caused the Stock Market Crash of 1929-And What Didn't," Time, accessed on April 13, 2021, <https://time.com/5707876/1929-wall-street-crash/>.

<sup>66</sup> James, Harold. "1929: The New York Stock Market Crash." *Representations* 110, no. 1 (2010): 129-44, accessed April 13, 2021.

security and hope for the middle and working class in America, arguing that real liberty consist from more than a political freedom.<sup>67</sup> However, the bill also focused on the government's centralization, rejected the laissez-faire approach and sustained the industry's socialization.<sup>68</sup> Ultimately, the New Deal legislation saved capitalism, however it did not save the entire economy.

The year 1938 was the revival of Democratic power, manifested in the majority of Democratic occupied seats in Congress. Notwithstanding, the Democratic office experienced a huge ideological division. The conflict arose from the determination of the Conservative Democrats to sabotage the New Deal Legislation. The act began to be identified under the term Roosevelt's "purge."<sup>69</sup> Roosevelt supported the idea that Americans should have two diametrically different parties, one liberal and one conservative. However, these parties needed to be consistent with their ideologies and values, and provide solid solutions for the nation.<sup>70</sup> Though, inconsistent thinking and imposter behaviour within the party members remain unacceptable for FDR. Ultimately, Roosevelt's attempts against Democratic Conservatives were unsuccessful. After the "purge," Republicans started to recruit right-leaning Democrats to join the party, all starting with the Dixiecrat movement.<sup>71</sup> The New Deal legislation received accusations and was considered as a bill supporting executive dictatorship due to concerned Americans, who feared the totalitarian regimes spreading in Europe.<sup>72</sup> FDR recognised that his presidential power demanded greater administrative autonomy, which led to a Reorganization act of 1939, which granted the president the authority to restructure

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<sup>67</sup> "What Was the New Deal?," Living New Deal, accessed April 13, 2021, <https://livingnewdeal.org/what-was-the-new-deal/>.

<sup>68</sup> SHEPARD, W. J. "The Philosophy of the New Deal," *Proceedings of the Annual Session (Southern Political Science Association)*, no. 7 (1934): 8-10, accessed April 13, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43924301>.

<sup>69</sup> Dunn, *Roosevelt's Purge: How FDR Fought to Change the Democratic Party*, 6.

<sup>70</sup> Dunn, *Roosevelt's Purge: How FDR Fought to Change the Democratic Party*, 6.

<sup>71</sup> Dunn, *Roosevelt's Purge: How FDR Fought to Change the Democratic Party*, 7.

<sup>72</sup> Gormley, *The Presidents and the Constitution*, 414.

federal administration.<sup>73</sup> The reorganization eventually led to the conception of the administrative presidency, which claimed that powerful executive leadership is necessary to democratic government.<sup>74</sup>

In the sphere of racial inequality, president Roosevelt has appointed an FBI authority to investigate civil-rights cases, lynching and other types of racial injustice. Throughout Roosevelt's legislation, the White House employed several African American appointees, who formed the "Black Cabinet" of the White House. What is more, FDR became the first American president that publicly opposed lynching and villainous death acts amongst African Americans.<sup>75</sup> The FDR's administration launched a solid coalition supporting Democrats, including Whites, African Americans, left-wing intellectuals, unemployed and immigrants.<sup>76</sup>

According to George Washington's established tradition, a president has never served in the administration for more than two terms; therefore, it might have seemed that FDR's long-lasting presidency started to associate a one-party system after he achieved victory against the Republican candidate, Wendell Willkie in the 1940 presidential elections.<sup>77</sup> Soon after FDR's inauguration, Japan invaded Pearl Harbour, and the United States entered the Second World War under Roosevelt's leadership. Meanwhile, Roosevelt cooperated with the Soviet Union and Britain in the Yalta Conference to win the war in Japan after Germany's upcoming capitulation.<sup>78</sup> Roosevelt's war efforts laid the groundwork for his vice president,

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<sup>73</sup> Millett, John D., and Lindsay Rogers. "The Legislative Veto and the Reorganization Act of 1939." *Public Administration Review* 1, no. 2 (1941): 176-89. Accessed April 14, 2021.

<sup>74</sup> Richard P. Nathan, Donald E. Simon, and David H. Bayley, "The Administrative Presidency," National Affairs, accessed April 14, 2021, [https://www.nationalaffairs.com/public\\_interest/detail/the-administrative-presidency](https://www.nationalaffairs.com/public_interest/detail/the-administrative-presidency).

<sup>75</sup> Lumen Learning, "US History II (OS Collection)," The Second New Deal | US History II (OS Collection), accessed April 14, 2021, <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-ushistory2os2xmaster/chapter/the-second-new-deal/>.

<sup>76</sup> History.com Editors, "New Deal."

<sup>77</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 74.

<sup>78</sup> History.com Editors, "Franklin D. Roosevelt," accessed April 14, 2021, [https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/franklin-d-roosevelt#section\\_6](https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/franklin-d-roosevelt#section_6).



Harry S. Truman, to succeed in the war against Japan after President's death. The aftermath of more than two decades of Roosevelt's administration originated the ratification of the Twenty-Second Amendment to the United States *Constitution*, which adjusted the presidency only to two consecutive terms.<sup>79</sup>

#### 4.2.3 Harry S. Truman

When the former vice-president, Harry Truman, succeeded the presidency from FDR, the war was still raging, the issue concerning the post-war assurance was not settled, and geopolitical disputes were gradually heading towards Cold War.<sup>80</sup> The fear of the authoritarian regimes contributed to establishing the Truman Doctrine, the Marshal Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing.<sup>81</sup> The Democratic Party under Truman's guidance focused on the extension and continuity of FDR's legacy.<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, the head of the state recognized that the policies implemented during the war needed to be modified. While history identified the Democratic Party as a political institution of Southerners, sustaining agriculture, domestic policy or minimal government, the Democratic Party throughout Truman's presidency represented a different ideology. After Truman inherited FDR's presidency, Democrats evolved into the party dominated by the urban majority, the civil rights movement, and the party that centred its policies on improving business regulation and organized labour.<sup>83</sup> Many Southern Democrats objected president's commitment to civil rights, including Truman's executive order desegregating the armed forces. Some Democrats abandoned the party and launched the States

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<sup>79</sup> "The 22nd Amendment of the U.S. Constitution," National Constitution Center – The 22nd Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, accessed April 14, 2021, <https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/amendment/amendment-xxii>.

<sup>80</sup> Gormley, *The Presidents and the Constitution*, 428.

<sup>81</sup> Gormley, *The Presidents and the Constitution*, 429.

<sup>82</sup> Sean J. Savage, *Truman and the Democratic Party* (Lexington, KY: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1997), 2.

<sup>83</sup> Savage, *Truman and the Democratic Party*, 1.

Rights Democratic Party, supporting the segregation.<sup>84</sup> Following the Truman re-election in 1948, Congress implemented various liberal reforms. The legislation succeeded in the minimum wage increase, and the Housing Act was finally declared, providing 800,000 new homes for people in poverty.<sup>85</sup>

Truman endured throughout the obstacle, if not impossibility, to assemble the roots for the Democrats during a period marked by the extreme right wing and conservative political movements. President excelled in his approaches to evolve the Democratic Party's long-term ideological and political security. Despite the conservative challenges, Harry Truman was one of the post-World War II presidents who brought attention to improving and revitalizing his party's national structure as a way of shaping its intellectual and programmatic character, its internal stability, and electoral prospects.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, Truman's defeat to his Republican opponent, Dwight D. Eisenhower, in the 1952 election, have caused the termination of the 20 years of Democratic dominance in the presidential office.

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<sup>84</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 77.

<sup>85</sup> History.com Editors. "President Truman Delivers His Fair Deal Speech," History.com, accessed April 15, 2021. <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/truman-delivers-his-fair-deal-speech>.

<sup>86</sup> Dunn, *Roosevelt's Purge: How FDR Fought to Change the Democratic Party*, 205.

## 5 THE CAMELOT ERA

The 1960 presidential election represented competition between the Republican opponent Richard Nixon and the youngest presidential candidate ever, Democrat John F. Kennedy.<sup>87</sup> Besides JFK's youthful and intrinsic political behaviour, Kennedy was also the first presidential candidate who was a Catholic believer; therefore, his faith urged him to promulgate that the political decisions during his administration would be based on the needs of the nation rather than the Catholic Church's. To secure the number of southerner votes, Kennedy appointed Southerner Lyndon B. Johnson as his running mate. Kennedy represented a symbolism of change, plus he portrayed himself as a supporter of the New Deal, a patriot, and as an American who place his country above his religion. Beyond that, Kennedy's most significant asset was his rhetoric skills and the opportunity to spread his ideas via television for the very first time in the history of elections. Kennedy's administration gained notable support from the Black Americans following Martin Luther King's imprisonment. The response of the Democratic nominee for King's redemption accomplished Kennedy a lead over his Republican opponent.

The inaugural speech of President Kennedy remained as one of the most celebrated in the history of the U.S. and emphasized the strength of integration and nationalism: "And so, my fellow Americans: ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country."<sup>88</sup> Shortly after the inauguration, Kennedy validated the Peace Corps and Alliance for Progress, which is an alliance between the United States and Latin America.<sup>89</sup> Despite his proactivity in the foreign policy, his strategies to fight the Communistic regimes

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<sup>87</sup> Sean J. Savage, *JFK, LBJ, and the Democratic Party* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 1.

<sup>88</sup> President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PEC1C4p0k3E>.

<sup>89</sup> Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963*, 24.

in Cuba remained a failure.<sup>90</sup> Along with his administration, Kennedy was devoted to accomplishing the legislative programs of the New Frontier. President was convinced that the legislation would boost technological, economic and political conditions and eventually develop a better reputation for the United States. One of the crucial approaches of New Frontier would be accomplished by a successful mission to the Moon, and thus winning the Space Race. President asked Congress to provide the mission's funding, arguing that it would earn the United States supremacy over the Soviets.<sup>91</sup> Eventually, the Space Race became the New Frontier of the Cold War. Over the time, the relationship between U.S. and Soviets became drastically better. Kennedy averted nuclear threat in Cuba and established the “hot line” between Washington and Moscow.<sup>92</sup>

In 1963, President Kennedy delivered one of the most memorable speeches in U.S. history, strived to accelerate the peace negotiation with the Soviets, and to maintain a settlement with Khrushchev concerning the prohibition of nuclear weapon tests,<sup>93</sup> which would put aside the ongoing Soviet-American dispute. Another significant foreign policy triumph was the President's Kennedy diplomatic route to Europe, namely his speech in Berlin, where he revealed the reality of communistic oppression.

However, while the foreign policies were successful, the domestic policy was fading. The ongoing problems regarding the civil rights movement, segregation and the KKK attacks resulted in adding the Fifteenth Amendment to the U.S *Constitution*.<sup>94</sup> Throughout Kennedy's administration, the involvement of the U.S. in southern Vietnam began to develop. President approved the engagement of the U.S. forces to support resistance to communistic oppression from northern Vietnam, while it was in Kennedy's interest to withdraw the troops

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<sup>90</sup> Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963*, 25.

<sup>91</sup> Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963*, 31.

<sup>92</sup> History.com Editors, “Kennedy Proposes Joint Mission to the Moon,” accessed April 16, 2021. <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/kennedy-proposes-joint-mission-to-the-moon>.

<sup>93</sup> Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963*, 49.

<sup>94</sup> Dallek, *An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963*, 61.

during his second administrative term.<sup>95</sup> President's further plans were never accomplished while he was assassinated in November 1963, sitting in the open limousine heading to a presidential campaign regarding his re-election.<sup>96</sup> The same day of the assassination, JFK's running mate Lyndon Johnson became the 36th president of the United States.

### 5.1 An attempt for the Great Society

The policies Kennedy intended to take place during his administration were implicated during Johnson's presidency. Johnson was loyal to Kennedy's programs, which were the origin of the Great Society initiative, focusing primarily on overcoming poverty, supporting equal rights, decreasing criminality and protecting the environment. Among other concerns, the issue of criminality was rapidly increasing, which was seen through Black Muslims demonstrations against racial injustice, which culminated with Malcolm X's assassination, what is more, a few months later, the leader of the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King, was assassinated. The public's reaction to these events led to an outburst of anti-violence demonstrations, which went hand in hand with the demonstrations against the Vietnam war. Notwithstanding the powerful demonstrations, President Johnson announced that America would assign extra troops to Vietnam.

During the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention, tens of thousands of activists moved to the streets to demonstrate against the Vietnam war, political status quo and Martin Luther King's assassination. The Demonstrations of Youth and National Mobility Committee to End the War, including Rennie Davis and Tom Hayden, marched into the streets when the Democratic delegates came to Chicago for the convention.<sup>97</sup> The Democratic Party ex-

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<sup>95</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 81.

<sup>96</sup> Gormley, *The Presidents and the Constitution*, 469.

<sup>97</sup> 1968 Democratic Convention, accessed March 25, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Iye1NQy1NY&t=1s>.

perienced another ideological division at the moment when the party presented three presidential candidates. Though, Robert Kennedy, the progressive and anti-war nominee, was assassinated after winning the California primary.<sup>98</sup> The rivalry proceeded among Eugene McCarthy and former running mate Herbert Humphrey. While Humphrey had his hands tied with President Johnson's legislation, McCarthy argued for an anti-war approach and the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam, supporting the peace movement, which acquired significant popularity after Kennedy's assassination. The Chicago riots and the Democratic ideological divergence benefited Republicans in elections. The rift within the Democratic Party caused the end of their supremacy in the White House.

Yet, shortly before the elections, the year 1972 exposed a major political crime. The Watergate complex in Washington announced an outbreak by a group of men closely tied up with the Republican Party, while the purpose of the operation was to obtain harmful evidence against the Democratic presidential nominee. The scandal revealed confidential connections with president Nixon's corrupt re-election approaches, resulting in his resignation after severe allegations regarding the scandal.<sup>99</sup> The scandal was the opportunity for Democrats to resurrect voter's support and return to the White House, resulting in the presidential nomination of Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter. The presidency of a promising Democrat aimed at improving the administration after the scandalous years, declaring Civil Service Reforms or government organization.<sup>100</sup> However, Carter's presidency remains a failure. The former president performed a phenomenon known as "process presidency", or in other

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<sup>98</sup> History.com Editors, "Robert Kennedy," accessed March 25, 2021, [https://www.history.com/topics/1960s/robert-f-kennedy#section\\_5](https://www.history.com/topics/1960s/robert-f-kennedy#section_5).

<sup>99</sup> Fred Smoller, "Watergate Revisited," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 25, no. 2 (1992): 225-27, accessed March 29, 2021, [www.jstor.org/stable/419713](http://www.jstor.org/stable/419713).

<sup>100</sup> James L. Sundquist, "Jimmy Carter as Public Administrator: An Appraisal at Mid-Term," *Public Administration Review* 39, no. 1 (1979): 3-11, accessed March 29, 2021, [www.jstor.org/stable/3110370](http://www.jstor.org/stable/3110370).

words, failed to provide a set of solid policies and philosophy for the government,<sup>101</sup> which eventually caused Carter's defeat to Ronald Raegan.

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<sup>101</sup> Stephen Hess, "Jimmy Carter: Why He Failed," Brookings, accessed April 17, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/jimmy-carter-why-he-failed/>.

## 6 THE NEW GENERATION OF DEMOCRATS

Democrats neglected to remain superior in the White House through three consecutive terms. The values on which the party relied needed to be re-identified. The presidential elections of 1991 was troublesome for Democrats, while the Republican candidate G.H.W. Bush occurred unbeatable due to his successful military planning. Being aware of Bush's hypothetical victory, Democratic candidate Bill Clinton stroke the public with the new political concept labelled as the “New Generation of Democrats”, aimed to resurrect the economic growth. The approach was primarily centrist and had few similar values as Republicans, namely approval of the death penalty and disagreement with the tax-and-spend politics.<sup>102</sup> The primary goal of the new approach was to lead the Democratic Party into the center of political events. The concept consisted of establishing an institutional capacity that would develop a centrist alternative for the party.<sup>103</sup>

### 6.1 Bill Clinton

Bill Clinton was inaugurated in 1993 as the first president from the Baby Boomer Generation in the history of the United States, while he was also the first Democratic president since Franklin Delano Roosevelt to serve in the office for two consecutive terms. President Clinton, along with his running mate, Senator Albert Gore, represented a new generation in American political leadership.<sup>104</sup> Clinton’s administration declared a bundle of domestic legislation regarding criminality rate reduction, health care and the environment through his first term in office. President Clinton was also active in the declaration of social welfare legislation, such as the Family and Medical Leave Act and the Violence Against Woman

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<sup>102</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 98.

<sup>103</sup> Jon F. Hale “The Making of the New Democrats,” *Political Science Quarterly* 110, no. 2 (1995): 207-32, accessed March 30, 2021, [www.jstor.org/stable/2152360](http://www.jstor.org/stable/2152360).

<sup>104</sup> “William J. Clinton,” White House, accessed May 02, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/william-j-clinton/>.



Act.<sup>105</sup> Among other things, his administration was determined to end racial and gender discrimination throughout the implemented legislation.

The progressive approaches were evident after he appointed the most diverse cabinet in history. After this act, Cabinet consisted of more females than within the two previous administrations, and had appointed the record number of minorities and as well people with disabilities.<sup>106</sup> Clinton proceeded to express progressivism through the “Don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, which terminated the military service ban formulated during World War II concerning gay men, bisexuals and lesbians.<sup>107</sup> After a successful first term in office, Clinton sought re-election and defeated the Republican opponent Senator Bob Dole with the majority of electoral votes.<sup>108</sup> Throughout Clinton’s first successful presidential term, many democrats identified themselves as the “New Democrats”.

However, despite Clinton’s success during the first administrative term, his second term in office was thwarted by a White House intern scandal, which eventually culminated in Bill Clinton’s impeachment by the House of Representatives due to perjury and obstruction of justice.<sup>109</sup>

## 6.2 The 2000 Democratic Party Platform

The elections of 2000 represented a fight among Clinton’s running mate Al Gore and Republican candidate George W. Bush. Both nominees were concentrated essentially on domestic issues, including Social Welfare and Medicare. However, the differences between them remained crucial. Al Gore followed Clinton’s pathway and portrayed himself as a

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<sup>105</sup> History.com Editors, “Bill Clinton,” accessed May 02, 2021, [https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/bill-clinton#section\\_2](https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/bill-clinton#section_2).

<sup>106</sup> National archives and Records Administration, “The Clinton Presidency: Building One America,” accessed May 02, 2021, <https://clintonwhitehouse5.archives.gov/WH/Accomplishments/eightyears-11.html>.

<sup>107</sup> Gormley, *The Presidents and the Constitution*, 576.

<sup>108</sup> History.com Editors, “Bill Clinton,” accessed May 02, 2021, [https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/bill-clinton#section\\_2](https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/bill-clinton#section_2).

<sup>109</sup> Wagner, *History of the Democratic Party*, 101.

“New Democrat,” ready to fight environmental issues and improve U.S. education. On the contrary, Bush represented conservatism and tradition. Even though Gore won the popular vote, neither of the candidates received the necessary 270 electoral votes for the victory.<sup>110</sup> The outcome of the elections was the closest one in U.S. history, resulting in the necessity of the Supreme Court to resolve the dispute. The Supreme Court validated the victory to the Republican candidate George W. Bush.

Nevertheless, Democrats were willing to fight for a spot in the White House, and so the following presidential elections remained a battle between the incumbent President George W. Bush from the Republican Party and the nominee from the Democratic Party, Senator John Kerry. The amount of both popular and electoral votes occurred very close; however the victory was earned by George W. Bush with 286 electoral votes.<sup>111</sup> Despite the victory of the Republican candidate, some Democrats claimed that the results of the votes were fraudulent. However, despite the allegations that the 2004 elections were a systematic electronic voting fraud, the verdict published in the New York Times declared that there is no evidence, such a thing happened, and therefore the allegations remained a conspiracy theory.<sup>112</sup>

### **6.3 The Presidential Election of 2008**

In February 2007, Democratic Party candidate Barack Hussein Obama announced his candidacy for the 2008 presidential elections. Obama chose Senator Joseph R. Biden as his

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<sup>110</sup> Khan Academy, “The Election of 2000,” accessed April 19, 2021, <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/modern-us/1990s-america/a/the-election-of-2000>.

<sup>111</sup> “Presidential election of 2004,” 270toWin.com, accessed May 05, 2021, [https://www.270towin.com/2004\\_Election/](https://www.270towin.com/2004_Election/).

<sup>112</sup> “Was the 2004 Election stolen?” In These Times, accessed May 05, 2021, <https://inthesetimes.com/article/was-the-2004-election-stolen>.

running mate and declared that he would challenge the front-runner of the Democratic Party, the former first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton.<sup>113</sup>

During the presidential campaign, Obama became one of the most inspiring politicians in history, who effectively explained his visions, avoided amateurish mistakes and pragmatism. Due to the outrageous economic crisis that took place during the months of the elections, Americans wanted to know the answers to the ongoing economic issues and see plans for economic recovery.<sup>114</sup>

Obama decided to implement an approach that defined him as the face of change and a sense of hope, using the campaign slogan “Yes, We Can.” Yet, Obama’s political slogan represented a bigger picture, whereas “Yes, We Can” represented the rich intertextuality of the historical events of the American nation. The slogan referred to slavery, abolitionism, New Frontier, the Space Race and many other historical events, and therefore did valuable political work by indexing the larger message of Obama’s campaign each time the slogan was repeated in the intertextual web of public discourse.<sup>115</sup> Obama, likewise the former President Kennedy, was aware of the power of the media and therefore used television, radio, websites and other forms of social media and communicative channels to distribute his presidential campaign among voters and to communicate with his supporters. What is more, the musician will.i.am of the Black Eyed Peas and Jesse Dylan, released a “Yes We Can” speech in the unique form of a music video featuring several celebrities and therefore, carved the message of the political campaign into the public consciousness.<sup>116</sup> The elections resulted in

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<sup>113</sup> Gormley, *The Presidents and the Constitution*, 607.

<sup>114</sup> History.com Editors, “Barack Obama,” accessed April 20, 2021, [https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/barack-obama#section\\_6](https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/barack-obama#section_6).

<sup>115</sup> A. Hodges, “Yes, we can and the power of political slogans,” accessed May 02, 2021, <https://www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/2019/10/21/yes-we-can-and-the-power-of-political-slogans/>.

<sup>116</sup> Paul, Christiansen, “Yes, We Can: 2008. In *Orchestrating Public Opinion: How Music Persuades in Television Political Ads for US Presidential Campaigns, 1952–2016*, 175–84,” accessed May 2, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv8pzc5.20>.

the victory of Democrats, with a score of 365 electoral votes over McCain's 173 electoral votes.<sup>117</sup>

The victory of the Democrats was a historical milestone for the Democratic Party and symbolized progress through various aspects. The party leader is always essential figure since it carries specific symbolism and fundamental ideologies for the party. In the 2008 elections, Barack Hussein Obama symbolized for the both Democratic Party and the American society the progress toward the civil rights movement, transformation and the embodiment of the American Dream. The obtained status of the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the U.S., and more precisely the status of America's first African American president, symbolized that Obama crossed the ultimate colour line in a country that was stained by slavery.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> New York Times, "Election Results 2008," accessed May 2, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/elections/2008/results/president/map.html>.

<sup>118</sup> John Kenneth White, "Barack Obama's America, In Barack Obama's America: How New Conceptions of Race, Family, and Religion Ended the Reagan Era," 213-36. accessed May 1, 2021, [www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt22p7hhs](http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt22p7hhs).

## CONCLUSION

The evolution of the Democratic Party remains an essential and remarkable institutional change. A party initially established by racist Southerners to preserve their political interests has become the symbol of liberalism and progressivism in modern America. The transformation in the ideology of Democrats continuously evolved and was reflected throughout the different generations of Democratic Party leaders. Notwithstanding, the shift could also be observed on the diverse spectrum of voters; that is, the party of white supremacy has shifted to a party preferred by minorities, blacks, whites and the urbanized middle class.

The voting rights limitations set by the founding fathers ensured that the only way one can contribute to the political events was through land ownership and, essentially, white privilege. Following the birth of Jacksonian democracy, the party was guided primarily with the aspiration to fulfill Manifest Destiny, practiced dominantly through white supremacy and westward expansion. However, while the Democratic Party firmly formed its legacy under the guidance of Andrew Jackson, the party was at the interface between the symbol of influential, self-made Democrats and the symbolism of cruelty. After the lengthy dispute within the party regarding the end of slavery, which culminated into ideological inconsistency and resulted in 24 years of Democratic void in the White House, Democrats began to re-identify the party's values and as well the target group of their voters. Significantly, Woodrow Wilson managed to be the leader of Democratic progressivism. After Wilson's presidency, the White House was occupied with three Republican administrations until the presidency of Democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt, which paved Democrats the path for the modern political approach. FDR served in the office for 12 years and strived to improve society after the economic crisis. After implementing the New Deal legislation, which eventually saved capitalism and after the creation of the "Black Cabinet," the Democratic Party maintained a

lengthy journey towards ideological growth and progress regarding the civil rights movement. However, during the presidency of Harry S. Truman, Democrats evolved into the party dominated by the urban majority and to the party that focused its policies on business regulation and organized labor. Party continued to fulfil the new, modern purpose, and an excellent opportunity to do so was JFK's presidency, who managed to develop a significant symbol for his administration based on the vision to accomplish the New Frontier, improved international relations of the U.S. and aspired to ease the Cold War, though unfortunately never had the opportunity to reach a second term in office. The ongoing situation after Kennedy's assassination culminated into years of violence and attempts of the civil rights movement to end the Vietnam War and racial injustice. Democrats however, failed to take the uniform standpoint during the 1968 Chicago Convention. Which resulted in an ideological collapse within the party, and ultimately caused Democrats a rapid decline of voters. After the fiasco of 1968, Democrats returned to the political scene more vital than ever, with a new centrist approach. The Democratic Party aspired to grow and thus adjusted its legislation to a wide range of voters. However, after the first successful term, President Clinton's success was ruined by a scandal which eventually culminated in Bill Clinton's impeachment by the House of Representatives.

Nevertheless, in 2007, the Democratic Party experienced a complete reversal. Barack Obama symbolized an idea that was surreal in the earlier days of the party. In addition, he represented the embodiment of the American Dream, change and a sense of hope that eventually helped him win the title of 44th President of the United States and, notably, the title of the first African American president, from a political party that was in its beginnings Party of white racist Southerners.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FDR Franklin Delano Roosevelt

JFK John Fitzgerald Kennedy

LBJ Lyndon Baines Johnson

KKK Ku Klux Klan