

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
Hamma Lakhdar University of El-Oued
Faculty of Arts and Languages
Department Of Arts and English Language



**Investigating the Development of the American Political Parties during the
Antebellum Period**

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of Requirements for
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

Submitted by:

Imane KERROUCHE

Sabrine MERKHI

Supervised by:

Dr. Kouider YOUCEF

Board of Examiners:

Dr. Asma NESBA

President

University of El-Oued

Dr. Kouider YOUCEF

Supervisor

University of El-Oued

Dr. Zohra MEHELLOU

Examiner

University of El-Oued

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Dedication

To my beloved mother, your unwavering love and boundless sacrifices have been the cornerstone of my journey. Your strength has been my guiding light, leading me towards success. To my father, siblings, and grandmother, your support and care have nurtured me endlessly. I owe immeasurable gratitude for your presence in my life.

In loving memory of my grandfather, whose wisdom is deeply missed, and to my aunt, my second mother, whose affection has shaped my character. To my fiancé, my steadfast companion, and greatest supporter, your love has been a wellspring of strength and inspiration. Your belief in me fuels my determination to reach new heights.

This achievement is as much yours as it is mine. With heartfelt appreciation.

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the development of American political parties during the Antebellum period, a critical era marked by profound social, economic, and political transformations. The study aims to elucidate how these changes influenced the formation and evolution of the political party system in the United States. This research was undertaken to address gaps in existing scholarship that often overlooks the broader trends and reforms shaping party dynamics. Utilizing a historical research methodology, the study relies on primary sources such as historical documents, alongside secondary sources including scholarly books and journal articles. The analysis is both descriptive and analytical, providing a comprehensive narrative of events and their significance. The first chapter examines the Antebellum era's manifestations and reforms, including the expansion of suffrage, economic developments, and social movements. The second chapter delves into the political party system during this period, analyzing the emergence of parties, their platforms, and their responses to key issues like slavery and states' rights. The study concludes that the Antebellum period was pivotal in shaping the modern American political landscape, with the formation of new parties and ideologies that continue to influence contemporary politics. The findings highlight the importance of the historical context in understanding political structures and contribute to ongoing discussions about political development and reform.

Keywords: Antebellum Period, Political Parties, Reforms, United States History.

Table of Contents

Dedication	I
Acknowledgement	II
Abstract	III
Table of Contents	IV
General Introduction	1

Chapter 1: The Antebellum Era: Manifestations and Reforms

Introduction	4
1.1 Pre-Antebellum Era	5
1.1.1 Society	6
1.1.2 Politics	7
1.1.3 Economics	8
1.2 The Antebellum Era	9
1.2.1 Definition:	9
1.2.2 The Antebellum Manifestations	10
1.2.2.1 Slavery: Sectional Controversy between the North and the South	11
1.2.2.1.1 The Slave Labor in the South VS. Free Labor in the North:	12
1.2.2.1.1.1 Slave Labor in the South	12
1.2.2.1.1.2 Free Labor in the North.....	13
1.2.2.1.2 The Cotton Economy in the South:	14
1.2.2.1.1 The Industry Revolution in the North	15
1.2.3 The Antebellum Reforms	17
1.2.3.1 The Abolitionism	19
1.2.3.2 Temperance	19
1.2.3.3 Labor Reform	20

1.2.3.4 Education	21
1.2.3.5 Women's Rights Movements	21
Conclusion	23

Chapter 2: The Political Parties during the Antebellum Era

Introduction	26
2.1 American Federalism and Party System	27
2.2 The Main Political Parties	28
2.2.1 The Whig Party:	30
2.2.2 The Democratic Party:	34
2.2.3 The American Party or Know Nothing Party:	36
2.2.4 The Anti-Masonic Party:	37
2.2.5 The Liberty Party:	38
2.2.6 The Free Soil Party:	39
2.3 Kansas Nebraska Act and the Rise of the Republican Party	40
2.2 Slavery, Anti-Slavery and Political Parties	42
2.4.1 The Democrats and the Whigs Compromises over Slavery:	43
2.5 Political Parties and Immigrant Tide.....	45
Conclusion	45
General Conclusion	47
References	49
الملخص	52

General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

The Antebellum period, spanning from the late 18th century to the onset of the American Civil War in 1861, represents a critical era in American history. This era was characterized by significant social, economic, and political transformations that laid the groundwork for the modern United States. The development of political parties during this period is particularly noteworthy as it reflects the evolving democratic principles and sectional interests that shaped the nation. Initially, the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans dominated the political landscape, but new parties like the Whigs and Democrats emerged in response to issues such as slavery, states' rights, and economic policy, illustrating the dynamic nature of American politics (Holt, 1999). Therefore, the Antebellum period serves as a pivotal epoch for understanding the origins and evolution of the American political party system.

2. Statement of the Problem

Understanding the larger political and social changes that took place in the US in the early 19th century requires an understanding of the evolution of American political parties throughout the Antebellum era. This dissertation explores how the political environment changed over time, starting with the Federalist and Democratic-Republican parties' early supremacy, moving on to the establishment of the Democratic and Whig parties, and finally ending with the Republican Party. A time of great social and economic change, rising sectional tensions, and fast economic expansion, the Antebellum period offered an ideal environment for political realignment and innovation.

This paper investigates the main causes of these shifts, including governmental regulations and the effects of social movements like temperance and abolitionism. Through an examination of these relationships, the dissertation seeks to offer a thorough grasp of how political parties adjusted to and impacted the changing trends in American culture, emphasizing the ways in which these advancements shaped contemporary American political structures and democratic norms.

3. Research Questions

The following research questions guide the current study:

1. What were the major social, economic, and political manifestations during the Antebellum period?
2. How did these manifestations influence the development of political parties in the United States?
3. What were the key reforms during the Antebellum era that affected the political party system?
4. How did the political party system evolve during the Antebellum period in response to sectional and national issues?

4. Aims of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to investigate the development of American political parties during the Antebellum period. This includes examining the socio-economic and political contexts that influenced party formation and evolution. Specifically, the study aims to:

- Analyze the major manifestations and reforms of the Antebellum era.

- Explore the impact of these changes on the political party system.
- Provide a detailed account of how political parties responded to key issues of the time.

5. Significance of the Study

This dissertation holds a significant value for both historical scholarship and contemporary political analysis. By elucidating the origins and transformations of the American political party system, it contributes to a deeper understanding of current political structures and behaviors. Moreover, this study offers insights into how historical contexts shape political ideologies and party dynamics, providing a framework for analyzing political developments in other periods and regions.

6. Research Methodology

The study employs a historical research methodology, utilizing both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources such as party platforms. Secondary sources comprise scholarly books, journal articles, and previous research studies on the Antebellum period and American political parties. The analysis will be both descriptive and analytical, providing a narrative of events while also interpreting their significance within the broader political context.

7. Structure of the Study

The dissertation is structured into two main chapters, each delving into critical aspects of the research topic. The first chapter, "The Antebellum Era: Manifestations and Reforms," meticulously explores the multifaceted social, economic, and political landscape of the Antebellum period. Through a thorough examination, it sheds light on the pivotal reforms that reshaped American society, offering insight into their lasting implications. Meanwhile, the second chapter, "The Political Party System during the Antebellum Era," shifts the focus towards the intricate

evolution of the political party system during this transformative period. This chapter meticulously dissects the emergence of different political factions, their respective platforms, and their nuanced responses to the pressing issues of the time. By intertwining these narratives, the dissertation provides a holistic understanding of how the Antebellum era significantly influenced the development of American political parties. These chapters collectively offer invaluable insights into the intricate formation and evolution of political systems during this pivotal era of American history.

CHAPTER ONE

The Antebellum Era: Manifestations and Reforms

Chapter 1: The Antebellum Era: Manifestations and Reforms

Introduction	4
1.1 Pre-Antebellum Era	5
1.1.1 Society	6
1.1.2 Politics	7
1.1.3 Economics	8
1.2 The Antebellum Era	9
1.2.1 Definition:	9
1.2.2 The Antebellum Manifestations	10
1.2.2.1 Slavery: Sectional Controversy between the North and the South	11
1.2.2.1.1 The Slave Labor in the South VS. Free Labor in the North:	12
1.2.2.1.1.1 Slave Labor in the South	12
1.2.2.1.1.2 Free Labor in the North	13
1.2.2.1.2 The Cotton Economy in the South:	14
1.2.2.1.1 The Industry Revolution in the North	15
1.2.3 The Antebellum Reforms	17
1.2.3.1 The Abolitionism	19
1.2.3.2 Temperance	19
1.2.3.3 Labor Reform	20
1.2.3.4 Education	21
1.2.3.5 Women's Rights Movements	21
Conclusion	23

Introduction

An important period in American history, the Antebellum Era encompassed the decades leading up to the Civil War, a period marked by profound social, political, and economic changes. After the Revolutionary War, the United States was a young nation that struggled to define itself and its course in the face of a world that was changing quickly. Between the end of the 18th century and the start of the Civil War in the middle of the 19th century, the country saw a number of significant changes that altered its institutions and society. The word "Antebellum" itself conjures up an intricate web of events characterized by both development and strife, wealth and exploitation. The period was characterized by the growth of market capitalism, the extension of democracy, and the widening of social divides. The nation's declared values of liberty and equality and the realities of racial prejudice, slavery, and economic inequality were at odds during this time.

This chapter takes us on a tour of the Antebellum Period, examining its many guises and the waves of change that aimed to solve the urgent problems of the day. Examining the economic systems, social classes, and cultural manifestations of Antebellum society, we explore its many facets from the cotton fields of the South to the growing industrial metropolis of the North.

Examining the many reform movements that arose in reaction to the difficulties and injustices of the time is crucial to our investigation. The abolitionist movement aimed to change the moral and political climate of Antebellum America, as did the women's rights movement, which promoted gender equality. Other initiatives included the campaign for temperance and moral reform. Our ultimate objective in researching the Antebellum Era is to examine the complex development of American political parties throughout this crucial time. Pre-Civil War party politics saw significant changes that both mirrored and influenced the larger social and economic changes

of the time, from the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans' creation of the First Party System to the division of the Second Party System along sectional lines.

1.1 Pre- Antebellum Era

The era known as the Antebellum period in American history, witnessed significant shifts in social, political, and economic dynamics. However, comprehending the intricacies of this period necessitates a thorough examination of the events that preceded it, notably the War of 1812. Despite often being overshadowed by the Revolutionary War, the War of 1812 played a pivotal role in shaping the United States' identity and laying the groundwork for the subsequent Antebellum period. Before delving into the pre-civil war era, it is imperative to grasp the historical context preceding it.

The War of 1812 emerged as a catalyst for profound change in American society and politics (Digital History, n.d.). Fought between the United States and Great Britain, this conflict, although often overshadowed by its predecessor, solidified America's independence and fostered a burgeoning sense of national identity. (U.S. National Park Service, n.d.).

A notable outcome of the War of 1812 was the surge in American nationalism. The conflict galvanized a spirit of patriotism and unity among Americans, who rallied to defend their fledgling nation against British encroachment. This burgeoning sense of national pride would profoundly influence subsequent political and cultural developments during the Antebellum period, as the United States endeavored to assert its identity on the global stage (U.S. National Park Service), n.d.).

Furthermore, the economic ramifications of the War of 1812 were substantial. British

maritime blockades and trade restrictions inflicted severe disruptions on American commerce, resulting in economic hardships and inflation. In response, the United States embarked on initiatives to bolster domestic industry and achieve economic self-sufficiency, laying the foundation for the protectionist policies that would characterize the Antebellum period (U.S. National Park Service), n.d.).

The conflict also exacerbated tensions between the United States and Native American tribes, as both factions vied for control over western territories. The Treaty of Ghent, which concluded the war in 1815, failed to address Native American grievances or resolve territorial disputes, thereby setting the stage for subsequent conflicts and territorial displacement during the Antebellum era (Dorn, 2020).

Building upon the legacy of the War of 1812, the Antebellum period witnessed a rapid pace of social, political, and economic transformation. The surge in American nationalism fueled expansionist ambitions, culminating in the annexation of Texas, the Mexican-American War, and fervent advocacy for Manifest Destiny. These territorial expansions exacerbated tensions between the North and South regarding the expansion of slavery, ultimately precipitating the eruption of the Civil War (Digital History, n.d.).

1.1.1 Society

The choice to go to war in 1812 was not unified among Americans. Many people were reluctant in initiating another war with Britain, still recuperating and reconstructing from the previous one. However, when battle became unavoidable, the inhabitants of this newly constituted nation were obliged, willingly or not, to band together in defense of their shared land. As a new country, the United States of America and its citizens were still finding out their place in a larger

context. What did it mean to be American? What exactly did it mean to be a citizen? What role will people of color play in our democracy? What about women? The War of 1812 provided a chance for Americans to determine what it meant to be "American" and to put democracy to the measure. The Americans who fought in the War of 1812 came from many walks of life, including men, women, and individuals of various ethnicities and cultures. This fight brought the residents of the varied American state together, allowing them to learn more about themselves and one another (American Citizens - War of 1812 (U.S. National Park Service), n.d.).

1.1.2 Politics

The Federalist Party, the country's founding political party, was the most significant casualty of the conflict. The Federalists, a bankers' and businessmen's party, were doomed in the eyes of the American public due to their consistent opposition to war. Their vehement resistance to the start of the war, as well as their later consideration of outright secession at the "Hartford Convention," infuriated many Americans, who saw the Federalists as "un-patriotic." The Federalists primarily represented individuals of means and fortune, with the majority of their membership being in the Northeast. With the end of the war, the party all but vanished, and many of its former members rallied behind other party banners, especially Republican and Whig, where they built the political foundation for centralization, protectionism, and, finally, abolitionism in the second half of the nineteenth century (Outcomes of the War of 1812, 2023)

Partisan enmity, which had reached a fever pitch during the Federalists' assassination, subsided significantly in the years following the war, inspiring many to refer to it as "the Era of

Good Feelings." The party of Thomas Jefferson rose to prominence, doubtless aided by the defeat of the Federalists, and proposed a pleasant image of a country of free farmers. This tranquil internal approach became coupled with an expansionist foreign policy (Outcomes of the War of 1812, 2023)

Andrew Jackson's election as the seventh President heralded the period of the "common man." Jackson was the de facto hero of the ordinary man, and his strategies as president emphasized this. Jackson's election in 1828 is particularly significant due to the change in American political demography. Suffrage grew increasingly common when governments removed property restrictions for voting, resulting in a significant increase in the total amount of people who could vote (Outcomes of the War of 1812, 2023)

1.1.3 Economics

The Chesapeake region's commerce and economic prowess, as well as its status as the base of the federal government, made it an ideal target for British discrimination, influencing trade and economic activity. Officially announcing the war, the USA used trade barriers to force the United Kingdom to stop impressing American sailors and enforcing the Orders-in-Council—Britain's legislation which hindered commerce with the United States before the start of the War of 1812. The British Admiralty imposed a naval occupation Chesapeake and Delaware Bays in December 1812. In February 1813, Britain started up the blockade with warships. The embargo expanded from New York to Orleans in May, substantially limiting American commerce with foreign markets. The conflict had a terrible impact on business. The US bans on trade before the war significantly reduced American exports. During the period of war, commerce was challenging to undertake due to British restrictions and direct attacks on tobacco businesses and other US trade commodities. Transportation, notably the development of the road and canal system, surged after

the conflict as the newly established country expanded into its interior areas. According to some experts in history, the War of 1812 marked a turning point in the United States' economy, as it shifted from looking east to international markets to looking west for new territories (U.S. National Park Service), n.d.).

Following the War of 1812, additional northern and southern states joined the Union. At the same time, King Cotton propelled the American economy. Unfortunately, King Cotton would not have grown to its current size without the practice of race-based slavery. While many Americans could point to significant progress in the years following the War of 1812, particularly in the formation of the nation's politics, art, and military service tradition, the debate of slavery kept dividing the country, and the real significance of America was not realized until after the great bloodletting of the Civil War (Fultonk, 2013).

The War of 1812 served as a pivotal juncture in American history, laying the groundwork for the subsequent Antebellum period. This conflict galvanized American nationalism, propelled economic transformations, and accentuated tensions surrounding slavery and territorial expansion. These themes would come to define the Antebellum era, ultimately culminating in the eruption of the Civil War. By comprehending the intricate relationship between the War of 1812 and the Antebellum period, one can glean valuable insights into the complexities of American history and the enduring legacy of this transformative era (Hickey, 2012).

1.2 The Antebellum Era

In American history, the Antebellum era was characterized by strong social reform movements, quick economic expansion, and rising political unrest. During this time, there was an

increase in industry, a push for social justice causes such as abolition, and the formation of distinct national and cultural identities.

1.2.1 Definition

The period known as Antebellum, originating from Latin, means before the war. Spanning from 1832 to 1860 refers to the era between the establishment of the U.S. government and the commencement of the American Civil War (Boomer, 2023).

The era was characterized by the emergence of distinct economies in the North and South, expansion towards the West, and a fervor for reform. These factors contributed to a volatile and tumultuous political atmosphere, ultimately culminating in the Civil War. During The Antebellum era, there was a lot of public activism. People wanted to make changes in society. Some groups wanted to stop the problems caused by drinking alcohol, while others wanted to improve education and make more people able to read. Abolitionists fought to end slavery everywhere. These were big topics of debate as America tried to get better (The College Board, 2007).

It was a significant watershed in American history. At first, it included several events that radically changed the course of history. Second, and perhaps most intriguingly, it was packed with items that were introduced about 200 years ago but have remained fundamental to American society and culture to this day. Certain aspects of this period, particularly in the South, are shown favorably in films and literature. Sometimes memories of life on plantations bring people joy. However, this downplays the horrors of slavery and the difficult political and social climate of the time. When the Civil War broke out in 1861, the pre-war era came to an end (Forret, 2012).

1.2.2 The Antebellum Manifestations

During the pre-Civil War era in the United States, several significant characteristics emerged. The practice of slavery spread into new areas, particularly in the Southern and Western regions, fueled by the demand for cotton (Baptist, 2014). Opposition to slavery gained traction, resulting in the growth of movements and organizations advocating for its abolition (McGerr, 2003). Strained relations between the Northern and Southern states heightened due to disagreements over slavery, states' rights, and economic disparities (Freehling, 1991). There was a widespread belief in the nation's destiny to expand westward, leading to territorial acquisitions and conflicts with Indigenous peoples (Merrill, 1999). Additionally, the North experienced rapid industrial development, contrasting with the predominantly agricultural economy of the South, contributing to economic gaps between the two regions (Goodman, 2010).

1.2.2.1 Slavery: Sectional Controversy between the North and the South

During the early 1800s, the North and South of the United States took divergent paths, resulting in their emergence as two markedly distinct regions. Various comprehensive differences, particularly regarding the institution of slavery, encompassed aspects such as endorsement or rejection of slavery, economic frameworks, religious customs, educational systems, cultural norms, and political ideologies. These discrepancies consistently fueled tension and opposition between the North and South, particularly concerning the issue of slavery. Over time, these differences deepened, leading to a gradual estrangement between the two regions as each developed its own unique identity and set of values. Harrold (2010) posited that the United States harbored a persistent conflict along its North-South boundary from its inception. This conflict primarily revolved around the contentious issue of slavery, particularly the escape of slaves, and left a profound imprint on American societal dynamics, cultural milieu, and political landscape. Initially confined to legal and

political confrontations concerning the return of runaway slaves to their owners, this border dispute gradually escalated into physical confrontations during the 1840s and 1850s among inhabitants of the border regions. Despite vocal grievances from plantation owners in the lower South regarding slave flight and northern abettors, it was the slaveholders residing closest to the North—the Border South—who suffered the most tangible repercussions from slave escapes. Consequently, in instances where interstate diplomacy and state interventions proved insufficient in safeguarding the property rights of slaveholders, inhabitants of the Border South clamored for federal intervention. Their allegiance to the Union, notably, hinged predominantly on their belief in the federal government's ability to provide the utmost protection against the threats posed by runaway slaves and the activities of the Underground Railroad. Broader War: Fighting over Slavery before the Civil War.

1.2.2.1.1 The Slave Labor in the South VS. Free Labor in the North

During the Antebellum period, the Southern economy was heavily dependent on slave labor, particularly for cotton and other cash crops, which entrenched a rigid social hierarchy. Conversely, the North embraced free labor, characterized by industrialization and a diversified economy, which promoted social mobility and a different set of economic and cultural values.

1.2.2.1.1.1 Slave Labor in the South

The research "Banking on Slavery: Financing Southern Expansion in the Antebellum United States" by Sharon Ann Murphy (2023) delves at the complex financial interactions that existed between Southern banks and slaveholders. Murphy provides examples of how banks changed their procedures to facilitate the slave trade by requiring the enslaved to serve as loan

collateral. The rise of slavery in the South was made possible by this financialization of human beings, which turned slaves into capital assets. Her work highlights how these economic foundations contributed to the success of the South and the eventual economic and social upheavals that led to the Civil War, underscoring the intricate relationship between slavery and the financial institutions of the region as well as the wider ramifications for American capitalism.

These insights illustrate the intricate relationship between Southern economic growth and slavery, emphasizing the interconnectedness of political, social, and economic forces during this pivotal juncture in American history. By employing a methodological approach based on empirical data, the research provides important new understandings of the intricate dynamics of slavery's economic impact on the South.

1.2.2.1.1.2 Free Labor in the North

Before the Civil War, the Republican Party's ideology in the North was based mostly on the idea of free labor. It embodied a commitment to economic opportunity, individual liberty, and the moral duty to end slavery. Republicans sought to build a society based on the values of liberty, equality, and the self-determination of every person by supporting free labor. The free labor ethic was central to the Republican Party's pre-Civil War doctrine, especially in the Northern states where it was a fundamental component. The idea of free work was fundamental to the Republican platform and represented a dedication to individual freedom, economic opportunity, and the inherent worth of labor. The Republican Party promoted policies that enhance economic opportunity for all, emphasizing the ability for citizens to engage in wage labor without the limitations imposed by slavery, in Northern areas where industry and wage labor were increasingly embraced. In addition, the concept of free labor emphasized the value of personal initiative and independence in contrast to the supposed exploitation and lack of autonomy that come with the

system of slavery. Republicans opposed slavery on moral and ethical grounds, claiming that it violated fundamental human rights and that the Declaration of Independence's ideas of equality and freedom could not be reconciled with involuntary servitude. Furthermore, the concept of free labor supported the idea of social mobility, which postulated that people may rise in social standing by talent and hard work. Republicans' political opposition to the spread of slavery was shaped by the free labor principle, which they claimed would reduce opportunities for free labor and impede economic development (Brettle, 2017).

1.2.2.1.2 The Cotton Economy in the South

According to U.S. History (n.d.), the term "Cotton Is King" aptly described the American economic expansion in the 1830s and 1840s. This phenomenon was not confined to the Southern states but had far-reaching implications. As one of the earliest luxury goods, alongside sugar and tobacco, cotton's prominence in the market transformed millions of Black individuals into commodities, highlighting its massive scale of consumption. Post-War of 1812, cotton emerged as the Southern economy's backbone, driving its plantation system that heavily relied on slavery and aimed at cash crop production for global trade. By 1834, cotton constituted nearly half of U.S. exports, a trend that persisted until the Civil War. Within the South, cotton's dominance shaped the region's history more than any other institution. The role of food in cotton production was critical, both as an input and a consumption item on farms, influencing the region's economic dynamics. The South's emphasis on cotton might have stimulated interregional food trade, benefiting the Western states' growth. Additionally, large cotton plantations potentially encouraged smaller farms to focus on food production, boosting productivity in grains and meats. This specialization likely fostered the development of southern processing, transportation, and marketing systems, contributing to continuous structural development.

The United States' South faced major obstacles in producing cotton in the middle of the 1850s. It was thought that by 1860, especially in central Texas, cotton agriculture had reached its limits, both geographically and environmentally. This restriction was seen as an indication of the South's imminent economic collapse. A few historians proposed that slavery, which relied on its constant spread into new areas, was about to reach a turning point. Due to the increasing degradation of the soil caused by inefficient farming practices and a significant reliance on slave labor, more expansion was required to maintain the economy. Without additional land, the plantation system that depended mostly on cotton would eventually come to an end and the Southern economy would stagnate (Ransom, 2020).

1.2.2.1.3 The Industry Revolution in the North

During the Antebellum period in the Northern United States, tight-knit immigrant communities and a strong industrial sector characterized the region. Unlike the South, where large plantations relied on slavery, the North favored smaller farmsteads and witnessed a significant shift towards manufacturing and industry. This transition was fueled by European immigrant labor and abundant natural resources like iron and copper. Major cities such as Philadelphia, New York City, and Chicago emerged as centers for transportation and manufacturing. Between 1800 and 1860, there was a notable decrease in agricultural laborers, while manufacturing employment rose.

Slavery virtually disappeared in the North, replaced by immigrant labor in urban areas and factories. The majority of Northerners identified with the Whig/Republican political party and were more likely to pursue careers in business, medicine, or education, with engineers being particularly prevalent in the region. Additionally, Northern children had higher rates of school attendance compared to their Southern counterparts (The North and the South, 2023).

Although the United States' Industrial Revolution began gradually and machinery was in use by 1783, major changes took place after the Civil War. The preference for waterpower over steam engines and the perception that owning land was a status symbol made it difficult for American business owners to raise finance at first. This delayed the adoption of steam power. Nevertheless, by 1860, the expansion of American industry was closely linked to the growing usage of steel, which provided the strength and elasticity needed for railroads, ships, machinery, and bridges. This allowed for more effective national transportation. Pennsylvania became the industrial center because it had an abundance of coal for making steel, which improved transportation systems and stimulated economic growth. Industrialists and manufacturers transformed production, increasing productivity and economic growth, particularly in the textile industry, yet problems remained such as satisfying the demand for cotton cloth in Europe (Housel, 2007).

The latter part of the 19th century witnessed a notable upsurge in technological advancements, spanning from the introduction of the telegraph to the invention of the electric light bulb, culminating in Henry Ford's introduction of the Model T in 1908, which fundamentally transformed the automotive sector. Despite the evident prosperity stemming from these innovations, this period was marred by labor exploitation and severe working conditions. Factory proprietors took advantage of unregulated markets, subjecting workers, particularly immigrants, to prolonged work hours, inadequate remuneration, and hazardous environments prevalent in sweatshops. The influx of approximately 27 million immigrants between 1880 and 1930 compounded labor challenges, with newcomers readily exploited in industries such as needlework and cigar-making, perpetuating a cycle of substandard conditions and minimal wages. Immigrant households often resorted to cramped piecework, often at the expense of their children's education,

underscoring the imperative for labor reforms to address societal inequities exacerbated by industrialization and to ensure equitable treatment and safeguarding of workers' rights. (Housel, 2007).

1.2.3 The Antebellum Reforms

The early 19th century witnessed significant reform efforts in the United States, largely influenced by the ideals of the Second Great Awakening. This religious revival emphasized personal accountability and the duty to aid others in overcoming sin. Reformist sentiments emerged beyond religious gatherings, advocating for moral perfection and communal redemption. Antebellum reform movements were organized through voluntary associations affiliated with churches. The spirit of reform was not exclusive to the U.S.; Europeans also pursued reform endeavors, with English abolitionists notably influential within the British Empire. Various reform movements proliferated in America during this period, becoming increasingly diverse over time. Women played significant roles across different reform initiatives. While not all Americans were actively involved in these movements, collectively, they represented a potent force shaping the Antebellum era. Between 1820 and 1865 in the United States, there was a period of continuous reform focused on improving both individuals and society as a whole. Various movements emerged during this time, addressing issues such as temperance, abolition of debt imprisonment, pacifism, antislavery, and improving prison conditions for rehabilitation. Other concerns included humane treatment of animals, Native Americans, care for the destitute and mentally ill, public education, abolition of tobacco and health reforms. Initially, reformers relied on persuading individuals through moral arguments, but this approach was not always successful. Consequently, they shifted towards organized efforts, including political action. Eventually, some reformers, particularly antislavery

activists, accepted the use of state coercion, including military force, to enforce reforms (Teachinghistory.org, n.d.).

1.2.3.1 The Abolitionism

The effort to eradicate slavery has a lengthy history, both internationally and in the United States; in fact, it began about the same time as slavery itself. However, abolitionism grew dramatically throughout the 1800s. Several groups developed in the initial years of the century called "colonizationists". These organizations aimed at expelling Blacks from the United States through emigration or the establishment of colonies in Africa. This concept envisions the progressive abolition of slavery. For the most part, colonizers embraced the concept of black inferiority. For some participants of the movement, the notion meant the abolition of slavery; for others, it represented a response to racism in the United States (Holcomb, 2016).

In the 1830s, American abolitionists, led by Evangelical Protestants, gained momentum in their fight against slavery. They believed slavery was a national sin and felt it was every American's duty to help end it by gradually freeing slaves and sending them back to Africa. However, not all Americans agreed. Views on slavery differed among states and individuals, with many fearing that anti-slavery activism could cause economic instability and disrupt the social order. By the mid-1800s, the conflicting ideologies of defending slavery while promoting universal freedoms had deeply divided the nation. Over the three decades before the Civil War, anti-slavery groups grew in number and effectiveness. Some became more radical, demanding immediate emancipation. Despite differing opinions on how to achieve their goals, abolitionists found unity in their belief in individual liberty and strong Protestant faith, which propelled their cause forward (Holcomb, 2016).

1.2.3.2 Temperance

The temperance movement emerged during the 1820s and 1830s in the United States, aiming to promote abstinence from alcohol consumption. Advocates highlighted the adverse effects of alcohol on health, social dynamics, and familial stability. They sought to educate the public about these impacts and endorsed policies for regulating or prohibiting alcohol. Initially focused on moderating alcohol intake, the movement gradually shifted towards advocating complete abstinence and ultimately supported national prohibition. Prominent figures such as Neal Dow, Ernestine Rose, Amelia Bloomer, and Frances Gage played pivotal roles in its advancement. Despite the passage of the 18th Amendment in 1919, which enforced national prohibition, subsequent repeals indicated mixed success. Nevertheless, the movement achieved state and local regulations that aimed to control alcohol consumption and promote public health, reflecting its significant impact on American society during the early 20th century. (Schrad, 2021)

The temperance movement emerged as a significant reform movement in the United States, advocating for reduced or abstained use of alcoholic beverages. It originated from the religious fervor of the Second Great Awakening, with reformers urging individuals to lead morally upright lives and help redeem their fellow sinners. Social changes like increasing urbanization and immigration contributed to the movement's growth, as some Americans felt unsettled by unfamiliar societal transformations and perceived moral decline. The emerging middle class, seeking to affirm their social status, also engaged in reform efforts. Alcohol had long been ingrained in American culture, but concerns about its health effects and societal harm led to the formation of the American Temperance Society in 1826. Women played a significant role in the movement, aligning with the prevailing "Cult of Domesticity" and advocating against alcohol consumption, which was often seen as detrimental to family life. Despite widespread support and legislative victories such as

Maine's temporary alcohol ban, the temperance movement did not fully curb alcohol consumption in the nineteenth century (Libretexts, 2022).

1.2.3.3 Labor Reform

During the American Antebellum Era, labor reform evolved as a critical reaction to the transforming industrial environment and the financial and social difficulties it presented. Workers endured tough working conditions, poor earnings, and extended working hours as the country's growth in industry and development progressed. The labor reform movement sought to address these concerns by lobbying for improved working conditions, higher compensation, and shorter work hours. Inspired by democratic and individual rights values, labor activists staged strikes, marches, and campaigns seeking reform. Although the labor reform movement was heavily opposed by employers and government leaders, it laid the framework for subsequent labor movements and played a role in America's continuous battle for the rights of employees and social justice. Labor reform aims to enhance workers' conditions, elevate their wages, and improve working hours. The American labor movement denotes the period in U.S. history when workers collaborated to enhance their employment circumstances and income. Labor reform refers to the process or movement aimed at instituting changes in laws, policies, or practices to improve the working conditions, wages, and overall well-being of workers (Labor Movement: Definition, Reform & Causes | VAI A, n.d.).

1.2.3.4 Education

Kliebard (1987) discusses the notable neglect of education during the Antebellum era, primarily due to rigid societal structures. Educational opportunities were sharply divided, with the wealthy accessing elite private institutions, while the less fortunate attended public schools geared towards vocational training. Nonetheless, a group of reformers acknowledged

education's pivotal role in democracy, especially in the North. Regional disparities were evident, with the North fostering educational reform spurred by industrialization, while the agrarian South, entrenched in slavery, faced hindrances to progress. Among these reformers, Horace Mann stood out, advocating for higher teacher standards, better pay, improved infrastructure, and a broader curriculum. He emphasized education as a natural right and moral education's importance. Educational reform extended beyond white males to include women and African Americans, who faced challenges but pursued educational equality. Despite slavery's constraints, educational opportunities for free African Americans symbolized progress towards equity. The significance of educational reform extended beyond its immediate goals, recognizing the crucial role of an educated electorate in democracy. Reformers understood the potential threat of an uninformed electorate to democracy's integrity. In conclusion, the Antebellum era's educational reform efforts laid the groundwork for a more inclusive and informed society, emphasizing education's dual role in individual empowerment and democratic success.

1.2.3.5 Women's Rights Movements

Women in America at the beginning of the 19th century were affected by a number of factors, such as the growth of the manufacturing and commercial sectors, the Revolutionary era's lasting legacy of valuing intellectual and political freedoms, the emerging Romantic Movement, and the ardent revivalism of Protestantism. These complex factors spurred a wave of reform initiatives, inspiring women to take an active role in their religious, philanthropic, and educational pursuits. They believed that women might advance intellectually and spiritually via education and volunteer work. Women took on central roles in reform groups, making substantial financial and membership contributions. Sometimes, their increased participation put them on a moral pedestal

and sparked discussions about their social standing. However, women's growing involvement in education and reform occasionally conflicted with traditional views of their innocence and delicacy. A tiny percentage of American women started fighting for their "Rights" in the second part of the 1800s. They included calls for equal access to higher education, property rights after marriage, the ability to file for divorce, economic prospects comparable to those enjoyed by men, moral equality for both sexes, and, most importantly, the ability to vote as a symbol of civic equality. Conventions that mark the organized phase of the women's rights movement, such the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 and the World's Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840, are generally the focal point of traditional narratives of the movement. This emphasis makes sense because organized revolutions are typically more spectacular and well-defined than the earlier years, when ideas formed more gradually and there were less attempts to challenge the current status (McMillen, 2008).

Many reformers saw parallels between the abolition and women's rights movements, with many advocating for both the end of slavery and the empowerment of women. Indeed, the women's rights movement largely stemmed from the anti-slavery movement, with women actively participating in abolitionist organizations like the Anti-Slavery Society and organizing events such as the Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women. A significant moment occurred in 1840 when the Anti-Slavery Society divided over the nomination of Abigail Kelley to serve on one of its committees, leading to the formation of the American and Foreign Anti-Slave Society, which excluded women. Kelley reflected on her experiences in the abolitionist movement, realizing that their efforts to free slaves mirrored their own constraints. However, the women's rights movement struggled to gain widespread support during the Antebellum era, as it challenged traditional notions of gender roles and "true womanhood." Women's rights activists asserted their right to the same

individual freedoms as men, including life, liberty, property, and happiness. Progress towards suffrage was minimal during this period, but by 1860, several states had granted women greater control over their wages and the ability to legally challenge attempts to deprive them of their earnings by husbands and fathers (Libretexts, 2022).

Conclusion

In summary, the American Antebellum period is a monument to the complexity and inconsistencies that arise when a country struggles with its identity and ideals. Starting in the early 19th century and ending with the start of the Civil War, this era was characterized by a number of significant reform movements and manifestations that exposed the underlying contradictions in American society. The ubiquitous system of slavery, which not only influenced the South's economic environment but also acted as a moral and political hotspot across the country, was fundamental to this age. The cotton boom and the need for cheap labor drove the spread of slavery into new areas, highlighting the profound divisions between the North and South and ultimately resulting in the start of hostilities.

However, revolutionary reform movements also emerged throughout the Antebellum period, despite the chaos of sectionalism and political unrest. A wave of social consciousness started to question the status quo and demand justice and equality for all, from the passionate abolitionist campaign led by leaders like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman to the trailblazing work of women's rights activists like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

Furthermore, there was a great deal of discussion during the Antebellum period regarding the nature of American democracy and the distribution of power between the federal government and state sovereignty. The unsolved conflicts between states' rights and centralized

government would eventually explode into the devastating Civil War, irreversibly changing the destiny of the country.

Looking back, the Antebellum period represents a turning point in the American history, a time of reflection and change that exposed the basic paradoxes of a country founded on liberty yet entangled in the atrocities of inequality and slavery. Thinking back on this turbulent phase serves as a reminder of the ongoing fight for justice, freedom, and human dignity, a fight that still has an impact on modern American culture.

CHAPTER TWO

The Political Party System during the Antebellum Era

Chapter 2: The Political Party System during the Antebellum Era

Introduction	26
2.1 American Federalism and Party System	27
2.2 The Main Political Parties	28
2.2.1 The Whig Party:	30
2.2.2 The Democratic Party:	34
2.2.3 The American Party or Know Nothing Party:	36
2.2.4 The Anti-Masonic Party:	37
2.2.5 The Liberty Party:	38
2.2.6 The Free Soil Party:	39
2.3 Kansas Nebraska Act and the Rise of the Republican Party	40
2.2 Slavery, Anti-Slavery and Political Parties	42
2.4.1 The Democrats and the Whigs Compromises over Slavery:	43
2.5 Political Parties and Immigrant Tide.....	45
Conclusion	45

Introduction:

During the Antebellum period, the nation observed the rise and development of political factions which significantly influenced the trajectory of the country. The era was chiefly characterized by the prominence of two main parties: the Democratic and Whig parties.

Originating from the principles of Thomas Jefferson, the Democratic Party advocated for states' rights, agrarian concerns, and a literal interpretation of the Constitution. Conversely, the Whig Party, emerging in the 1830s as a response to the perceived excesses of Andrew Jackson's presidency, advocated for a stronger federal government, internal improvements, and a more industrialized economy.

The Antebellum Era in America, spanning roughly from the late 18th century to the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, was a time of immense political upheaval and transformation. Central to this period was the development and evolution of the political party system, which played a crucial role in shaping the nation's policies, ideologies, and social fabric. This chapter explores the intricate dynamics of political parties during the Antebellum Era, delving into their origins, ideologies, internal conflicts, and impact on American society and governance. By examining the rise of prominent parties such as the Democratic Party, the Whig Party, and various third-party movements, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between politics, ideology, and power in pre-Civil War America. Through an analysis of primary sources, historical narratives, and scholarly interpretations, this chapter aims to shed light on the forces that shaped the political landscape of the Antebellum Era and laid the groundwork for the profound social and political changes that would follow.

2.1 American Federalism and Party System:

For a considerable duration, scholarly exploration has centered on evaluating the distribution of power, both centralized and decentralized, within federal government frameworks. Early investigations primarily scrutinized formal constitutional aspects and institutional evolution. Notably, Macmahon provided a comprehensive overview of conventional perspectives while also initiating innovative avenues of inquiry that persistently shape contemporary research endeavors. Macmahon (as cited in Scheiber, 1979)

The intricacies of federalism and its constitutional framework have posed enduring challenges in American historical discourse. Rather than viewing federalism as a fixed midpoint between confederation and nationhood, it is more accurately perceived as an ongoing dynamic tension inherent in, and originating from, the foundational document. This inherent ambiguity necessitates that the resolution of such tension becomes a political imperative, not solely a legal obligation, entrusted to successive generations following the nation's inception. (Whittington, 1996)

In addition, through embedding the U.S. Constitution within a tangible text, the framers established certain legal constraints on governmental activities, yet simultaneously allowed for the exploration and evolution of unresolved constitutional issues in subsequent deliberations. Reflecting on the constitutional essence of federalism underscores the deliberative and constructive aspects of political engagement in shaping constitutional interpretation. (Whittington, 1996)

Throughout history, political confrontations against central governments were prevalent. What set the United States apart from other established democratic nations was its extensive legacy of territorial-based resistance to central authority. While secessionist movements

had become increasingly frequent internationally, they represented a relatively modern trend, driven by evolving perceptions of national self-determination. In contrast, the United States had a longstanding tradition of challenging the territorial integrity of the Union, dating back to before its inception and persisting to the present day. (Anderson, 2013)

Ashworth (as cited in Bowen, 1988) in “Agrarians and Aristocrats,” examines the aftermath of the Panic of 1837 and the enactment of Van Buren’s Independent Treasury Bill. He argues that the period was characterized by intense political polarization over economic matters, notably banking, currency, and land issues. Ashworth contends that the political rhetoric of the time was not merely exaggeration but reflected deeply entrenched convictions among party representatives. By taking this rhetoric seriously, he suggests valuable insights into the political landscape can be gained. His work challenges the predominant focus of 1960s and 1970s scholarship on voter identity, values, and behavior, redirecting attention to the political elite. Ashworth observes the emergence of distinct ideological schisms between parties by the late 1830s, which is consistent with findings from numerous state and national level studies on party dynamics within the legislature and electorate. Despite acknowledging diverse perspectives within each party, Ashworth identifies a remarkable coherence and consistency in their respective ideologies.

(Bowen, 1988)

2.2 The Main Political Parties

Since the early 1960s, the scholarship of the new ‘political historians’ has significantly advanced our understanding of Antebellum politics. Employing various theoretical frameworks and quantitative methodologies from the social sciences, they have explored legislative behaviors, party structures, public policies, and voter behavior. Concurrently, studies informed by anthropological concepts such as political culture and ideology have reconstructed the belief systems and ideologies

shaping the perspectives of politicians and voters within their political milieu. This interdisciplinary approach has yielded a substantial and expanding body of literature, revealing the intricate nature of the political landscape and emphasizing the pivotal role of parties and their conflicts in Antebellum politics (Bowen, 1988).

During the nineteenth century, significant shifts occurred in American politics. In the 1830s and 1840s, the emergence of the Democratic and Whig parties marked the advent of mass party organizations globally. Subsequently, in the 1850s, the demise of the Whigs paved the way for the formation of the Republican Party. Lastly, the political landscape saw a transformative realignment in the 1890s, breaking the stalemate of the Gilded Age and establishing Republican supremacy until the 1930s (Formisano, 1999).

During a condensed timeframe, the realignment synthesis encountered skepticism and scrutiny. Historians raised inquiries regarding the authenticity of the social and political upheavals during the 1820s and 1830s, culminating in the establishment of the second party system, as constituting a genuine realignment. They contended that the Federalist and Republican factions had not firmly established themselves and failed to coalesce into a cohesive 'system'. Furthermore, they pointed to the electoral patterns of the 1820s. While the realignment of the 1850s precipitated substantial changes in both state policies and grassroots electoral coalitions, the realignment of the 1890s ostensibly yielded no discernible policy modifications (Formisano, 1999).

In contrast to Namier (1952), recent scholarship emphasizes the role of political parties in shaping early nineteenth-century parliamentary dynamics. Professor Derek Beales (1965) while acknowledging Namier's assertion that Britain underwent a constitutional monarchy transition due to the emergence of the modern party system between 1761 and 1845, two highly organized parliamentary factions essentially dominated the House of Commons. His analysis, primarily

centered on six crucial divisions between 1835 and 1841, reveals a consistent party alignment, particularly evident in non-policy matters such as speakership elections and votes of no-confidence. Beales (1965) suggests that these divisions served as a litmus test for party loyalty, highlighting the diminishing influence of independent members from the eighteenth century who previously balanced political factions. Beales' study draws inspiration from the works of Professors Norman Gash and W.O. Ayedelotte, who also arrived at similar conclusions by examining division lists. Additionally, D.H. Close (as cited in Newbould, 1985) examination of a broader range of significant divisions further supports the assertion that the two-party system thrived in the Commons during the aforementioned period (Newbould, 1985).

Following the disintegration of the regionally oriented Federalist Party in New England Post-War of 1812, there ensued a period of relative tranquility in American political affairs known as the "Era of Good Feelings." The ascendancy of Jacksonian Democracy in the late 1820s precipitated the formation of the Whig Party, supplanted in the 1850s by the emergence of the Republican Party. It was not until the late 19th century that a robust two-party system, comprising the Democratic and Republican parties, fully took shape. Concurrently, a multitude of alternative political factions surfaced, including the Know-Nothing Party, the Greenback Party, and the People's Party. Third-party movements persisted into the 20th century with the advent of the Progressive Party, the Socialist Party, the Reform Party, and the Libertarian Party. Despite this proliferation of political entities, there remained a prevailing sentiment of distrust toward partisan affiliations among the American populace, who viewed politics with a blend of disdain and fascination akin to a competitive spectacle (Critchlow, 2015).

2.2.1 The Whig Party

The new opposition party was hardly worthy of being called a party; it was more like an alliance built around common enemies and outlooks. The party name itself was meaningful. The “Whig” label-taken from the older label of English opposition to the crown and the American Revolution’s opposition to England-resonated with those who opposed legislative prerogative. The party contested the midterm elections of 1834 (elections were scattered throughout the year at the time). To do so, it cobbled together several groups of supporters. After cooperating in the 1834 midterms, Whigs ran three separate candidates in the 1836 presidential election, using different types of candidates to win votes from different regions. If they could have deprived the Democrats of an Electoral College majority, the House, which would decide the race, might have elected a Whig. By 1840, the party was fully unified behind one candidate (Rocklin, 2018).

Schlesinger, JR. (as cited in Atkins, 1994) criticized the ideas of the American Whig Party, considering them unproductive for comprehending society. However, recent historical perspectives have started to acknowledge Whig ideology as pivotal in Jacksonian politics. The Whig Party advocated for the economic advancement of United States and promoted the utilization of federal power to foster both material and moral progress. Whether Whig rhetoric genuinely represented a distinct worldview or was merely distracting “claptrap” remains debated. Nonetheless, it garnered the allegiance of nearly half of the American electorate, shaping their political perceptions. Given that Antebellum national political parties, each rooted in unique local political contexts, Whig and Democratic politicians tailored their strategies to fit the state-level political landscapes. Examining the Whig appeal at the state level offers insights into Whig political culture.

Despite receiving scant attention, the Whig Party in Tennessee was not overshadowed by the Democratic stronghold. Initially, voters overwhelmingly supported Andrew Jackson for the presidency. However, within three years after his tenure, they became embroiled in one of the nation's most fiercely contested state party systems. The Whigs emerged victorious in four out of seven state contests held between 1839 and 1851, with the national Whig Party carrying Tennessee in all four presidential elections from 1840 to 1852. Notably, this included the victory in which the Democratic nominee, James K. Polk, a Tennessean and close associate of Jackson, competed (Atkin, 1994).

During the early nineteenth century, the Foxite Whigs found themselves in a precarious position, sandwiched between a lackluster recent history and uncertain future prospects. With few opportunities for governmental office, except for brief period of Whig dominance during Charles James Fox's Talents Ministry in 1806-1807, the party experienced diminishing numbers and dwindling hopes for political ascension. Contemporary commentary, such as Byron's jest in *Don Juan*, highlighted the enduring theme of Whig exclusion from power. Historians have since characterized the Whigs as arguably the least effective party of their era, relegated to perpetual opposition. By the 1840, the profound impact of their achievements had become somewhat obscured by the success with which they had redefined the political discourse of the time (Anthony hay, 2005).

According to prevailing narratives in North Carolina politics, the Whig party consistently advocated for state intervention to foster the development of transportation infrastructure. Traditionally, this support for improvement projects has been attributed to the Western farmers' need for better transportation routes to market their goods and connect with external markets. Additionally, Whig merchants and entrepreneurs in the Eastern region sought

internal improvements to boost their towns' commercial viability. A recent analysis concluded that North Carolina Whigs were enthusiastic about utilizing state resources to advance internal improvements, a goal that unified various factions within the party. This perspective contrasts with the limited government approach of the Democrats, which Whigs deemed insufficient. Instead, the Whig agenda of promoting internal improvements was seen as compelling and attracted broad support (Jeffrey, 1978).

The Whigs communicated with voters through letters published as adverts in provincial publications, as well as handbills and broadsides printed on single sheets, which newspapers could not match in terms of speed and regularity (Wasson, 2006).

The Whigs refrained from actively crafting their public image through various media channels but capitalized on the advantage of benefiting from critical attacks on their opponents disseminated at no cost to their party treasury. A prime example of this strategy was the utilization of political caricatures, primarily targeted at the same demographic as publications like the *Edinburgh* or the *Examiner*. However, this approach incurred considerable expenses; for instance, to sustain production, one Whig minister allocated 24 pounds within a single year solely for political prints. This period witnessed the proliferation of sophisticated cartoons. Particularly during the heightened political fervor following the post-war period from 1815 and amidst the Reform Bill crisis, select caricatures garnered extensive circulation, consistently depicting the Whigs, notably in the 1830s, in a favorable light.

By the 1840s, the burgeoning mass market for Sunday papers had ushered in a new era

of popular press. While some publications overtly aligned with the Whig cause, others veered towards a more radical stance; nevertheless, their overarching effect remained detrimental to the Tories (Wasson, 2006).

2.2.2 The Democratic Party

The inception of the Democratic Party traces back to the 1820s, stemming from widespread grassroots backing during Andrew Jackson's presidency. Being the oldest political entity in the United States and among the most ancient globally, the Democrats played a pivotal role in shaping numerous aspects of the contemporary American political landscape. Throughout much of its early history, the party favored minimal federal intervention and emphasised local governance, except for the contentious matter of slavery, which prompted Southern factions to advocate for federal intervention by the late 1840s. This schism over slavery ultimately fractured the Democratic Party in the 1850s, culminating in the electoral success of Abraham Lincoln and the ascendance of the rival Republican Party in 1860 (Democratic Party, 2021).

The Democratic party, despite never explicitly endorsing slavery, held a stance that implicitly defended the institution, evident in their avoidance of condemning slavery and efforts to keep it off the political agenda. This stance was established as early as the 1830s, coinciding with significant events such as the emergence of abolitionist movements and slave rebellions. Democratic rhetoric, both in the north and south, contained veiled references supporting the preservation of slavery. Additionally, key figures like Stephen Douglas expressed sentiments aligning governance with the interests of white people, further reflecting the party's implicit stance on slavery (Gerring, 1994).

Nonetheless, individuals advocating southern interests exhibited specific

characteristics. They were significantly more inclined to align with the Democratic Party rather than the Whigs. During the consideration of the Compromise's ratification, their fundamental beliefs endured. These militants typically faced a choice between supporting the Democratic Party or abstaining from partisan allegiance altogether. Notably, they predominantly hailed from the Deep South, with the lowest representation found in the border states. Thus, the archetypal southern militant was a Democrat from the Deep South, often occupying influential positions such as United States Senators or governors, exemplified by figures like Jefferson Davis of Mississippi and John Slidell of Louisiana. Particularly in the Deep South, these individuals and their cohorts wielded significant influence within the Democratic Party, which itself held considerable sway within the state. (Ashworth, 2007)

In 1846, during Senate deliberations regarding a proposal concerning Michigan, Sidney Breese advocated for Congress's authority to allocate land for road construction, contending that such actions did not violate state sovereignty as long as the land belonged to the federal government. This perspective, which diverged from the strict constructionist viewpoint, posited that federal participation in development projects was permissible when utilizing federally owned land, either through state allocation or through direct federal initiatives. Conversely, traditionalists like Senator John Niles of Connecticut opposed the measure based on longstanding Jacksonian principles. Niles (as cited in Eyal, 2007) argued that granting land to states for internal improvements would excessively involve the federal government in state affairs, thus encroaching upon states' rights and potentially consolidating excessive power in centralized, potentially oppressive national authority (Eyal, 2007).

2.2.3 The American Party or Know Nothing Party

In 1854, a newly formed political entity, operating discreetly and exclusively through a network of members-only lodges, achieved its greatest success in Massachusetts. Referred to derisively as the Know-Nothings and self-identified as American, this clandestine organization made significant electoral gains in its inaugural statewide campaign, securing the highest number of votes ever attained by a party at the time. Its candidates, largely unknown in the political sphere, dominated various elective positions across the state, effectively reshaping the political landscape. Despite its remarkable victory in Massachusetts, the American Party failed to replicate such success elsewhere in the country and ultimately collapsed within a brief period. Its downfall was hastened by the emergence of another new political force, the Republican Party, leading to the rapid demise of the Know-Nothings after a mere three years in power (Mulkern, 1990).

In no state did the American Party achieve greater success than in Massachusetts. In 1854, the Party secured the governorship, the entire state senate, and nearly all seats in the state house of representatives. The American Party also gained control over the City of Boston and various other municipalities within Massachusetts. While in power, the Party enacted legislation that mirrored the anti-immigrant sentiments of the national Know-Nothing movement. However, it also distinguished itself through its opposition to slavery, advocacy for women's rights, regulation of industry, and support for initiatives aimed at improving the conditions of working people. These progressive actions seem to conflict with the American Party's anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic positions. This article examines the origins and context of the Massachusetts Know-Nothing movement to explore these apparent contradictions (Taylor, 2000).

The exceptional prevalence of Know-Nothingism in Massachusetts can be primarily

attributed to the transformative impact of modernization. However, beyond the commonly perceived narrative of native-born backlash against immigrants, Catholics, and the Southern states, the political ramifications of modernization encompassed broader dynamics. The rapid urban and industrial expansion experienced by the Commonwealth during the Antebellum era propelled it to the vanguard of industrializing states, resulting in profound social and economic upheavals (Mulkern, 1990).

2.2.4 The Anti-Masonic Party

The Anti-Masonic Party in the United States from 1820 to 1843 is an interesting political phenomenon. The origins of the Anti-Masonic movement, which might be tied to the mysterious death of William Morgan, a former Mason who had threatened to divulge Freemasonry's secrets. This episode, which occurred in 1826, fueled popular rage and distrust of hidden groups like as Freemasonry, creating a setting favorable to the formation of a political movement aimed at curbing their authority. The Anti-Masonic Party was founded in the United States in the early nineteenth century in response to growing skepticism and distrust of Freemasonry, a fraternal organization. The party gained popularity after the kidnapping of William Morgan, a former Mason who threatened to reveal the organization's secrets. This incident caused public outrage, prompting the formation of a political movement dedicated to fighting the dominance of secret groups like Freemasonry. The Anti-Masonic Party organized at the state and municipal levels, spreading its message through grassroots activities and media campaigns. It gathered support from individuals disgruntled with traditional political elites and sought to position itself as a defender of democratic values and government transparency. The Anti-Masonic Party had a considerable influence on American politics during the Jacksonian era, upsetting traditional party alliances and changing electoral elections. However, internal conflicts and shifting political

factors eventually led to its demise by the mid-1840s. Notwithstanding its brief existence, the AntiMasonic Party is an important chapter in American political history, demonstrating the challenges of democracy and the search of responsibility in administration (Vaughn, 2014).

2.2.5 The Liberty Party

Church reform was also a significant concern for the "comeouters." Many abolitionists encountered substantial opposition when they tried to increase their congregations' and denominations' opposition to slavery. As a result, many comeouters stressed the importance of democratic church governance. They understood, however, that the spiritual freedom they desired could potentially lead to antinomianism and chaos. Thus, these reformers sought a precarious balance between "despotic authority, on the one hand, and disorganization on the other," as William Goodell put it (p. 42). Despite this, Strong argues that perfectionism, rather than pragmatism, was the dominant ideology of the New York Liberty Party, as the party aimed to "keep 'all men from sin'" (p. 84). While Lewis Perry and John R. McKivigan have highlighted the role of comeouters, Strong's most significant contribution is his analysis of "the theological concepts and praxis that connected antislavery religious groups" (p. 93). The concept of entire sanctification held by New York's comeouter churches was influenced by the teachings of John Wesley, Nathaniel W. Taylor, and Presbyterian dissident Luther Myrick. Concurrently, Charles G. Finney's "new measures" revivalism facilitated the spread of entire sanctification throughout upper New York and much of the North (Rable, 2001).

Following the establishment of the Liberty Party, political abolitionists adeptly discerned and exploited institutional opportunities within the framework of the Second Party System. Specially, leaders of the Liberty Party astutely acknowledged the significance of Congress

as a platform for public discourse and endeavored to persuade congressional figures to adopt more progressive anti-slavery positions. Through lobbying efforts and occasional cooperation with predominantly Whig anti-slavery legislators, abolitionists incited vehement pro-slavery reactions. Subsequently, political abolitionists welcomed the resulting controversies, which vividly illustrated the extent of Slave Power influence over the federal government (Brooks, 2019).

Numerous female abolitionists aligned with the Liberty Party approach augmented the party's endeavors in fostering grassroots organizational frameworks. While assuming leadership positions less frequently compared to their Garrisonian counterparts, these women engaged in activities such as petition circulation, meeting attendance, literature dissemination, fundraising, candidate endorsement, exemplified by figures like Mary Davis of Peoria and Jane Grey Swisshelm of Pittsburgh (Brooks, 2019).

2.2.6 The Free Soil Party

The emergence of the Free-Soil Party in 1848, composed of New York Barnburner Democrats, radical anti-slavery Whigs, and the majority of the Liberty Party, represented a pivotal juncture in the evolution of the American anti-slavery platform and candidate garnered widespread support among Northerners, causing both major political parties to experience divisions along the lines of slavery. Notably, the Free Soilers diverged from previous anti-slavery groups by refraining from addressing Negro rights in their national agenda. While abolitionists traditionally advocated for equal social and political rights for free Blacks, the Free Soilers recognized that many Northerners, while opposed to slavery's expansion, were alienated by appeals for racial equality (Foner, 1965).

Encouraged by the national Free-Soil convention's backing of a homestead act, anti-

rent activists in various counties sought partnerships with the emerging party in 1848. The antirenters in Delaware County allied with the Free Soilers, endorsing their entire slate. In Albany County, a significant portion of delegates forming the local Free-Soil organization was militant anti-renters. However, internal conflicts among anti-slavery advocates, Whigs, and Hunkers hindered the county anti-rent association from making nominations. Nonetheless, Free-Soil supporters prevailed at the state anti-rent convention. They affirmed their belief “that no individual should possess more land than they can actively cultivate” and nominated John Dix, the Free-Soil gubernatorial candidate, as their representative (Huston, 2000).

A significant assembly of Ohio residents, representing a range of political affiliations, gathered at the state capital with Nathaniel Sawyer leading the proceedings. They promptly endorsed a series of resolutions emphasizing their commitment to freedom, opposing the spread of slavery, and expressing a readiness to collaborate with any faction staunchly against its expansion. Concerned by the absence of anti-slavery positions among candidates endorsed by slaveholders in Baltimore and Philadelphia, the Ohio group felt compelled to convene a larger assembly in Buffalo. This broader gathering aimed to unite individuals from across states and political persuasions who shared anti-slavery sentiments. The goal was to strategize and nominate candidates aligned with principles of freedom, seeking the support of a determined populace committed to safeguarding their liberties. (Rayback, 2014).

2.3 Kansas Nebraska Act and the Rise of the Republican Party

More than 150 years ago, the US Congress passed a law, known as the “An Act to Organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas,” under President Pierce’s administration. This legislation marked a departure from traditional territorial governance by not only delineating borders and establishing governments for Nebraska and Kansas but also granting their inhabitants

the authority to decide on the issue of slavery within their respective territories. This shift, referred to as “popular sovereignty,” effectively nullified the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which had previously prohibited slavery in the area, leading to significant contention and occasional violent clashes. The Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed as a result of the convergence of four important causes. The most important of these was Asa Whitney's 1845 initiative to build a transcontinental railroad. Whitney's idea was eventually rejected, but not before his efforts focused public attention and emphasized how important building a Pacific railroad was. However, the protracted struggle between several competitors for the railway's eastern terminus hampered development. (Wunder & Ross, 2008).

The second factor contributing to the circumstances surrounding the Kansas-Nebraska situation involved the complexities associated with organizing the region, particularly regarding its stance on slavery. The Missouri Compromise stipulated that slavery should be permanently prohibited in this area, but the interpretation of the term “forever” was subject to debate. Upon the annexation of Texas in 1845, Douglas attempted to implement a principle akin to popular sovereignty, advocating for the admission of states from Texas to determine their slavery status based on popular will. However, this provision was limited to states formed south of the Missouri Compromise line. Douglas himself proposed the clause affirming that states formed north of this line should remain perpetually free. Thus, Douglas and the congressional majority of that era endorsed the Northern interpretation, affirming that “forever” indeed meant forever in this context (Hodder, 1913).

The Kansas-Nebraska scenario was further complicated by a local imperative originating from Missouri and Iowa, advocating for the organization of Nebraska specifically to facilitate the construction of the Pacific railway. This initiative, extensively documented by

Professor Ray, was fueled by growing opposition in Missouri against Benton's Senate tenure, with the validity of Missouri's prohibition becoming a focal point in the debate between Benton's allies and detractors (Hodder, 1913).

The fourth factor influencing the Kansas-Nebraska dynamics stemmed from the actions of the emigrant Indian tribes, particularly the Wyandots, who advocated for territorial organization from Missouri and Iowa, the Wyandots, who relocated from Ohio to the west bank of the Missouri River near the mouth of the Kansas River in 1843, demonstrated a desire for selfgovernance. Despite their nominal Indian status, the Wyandots were primarily of white descent and possessed a structured governmental system, highlighting their agency in the territorial affairs (Hodder, 1913).

The initial manifestation of the Republican Party's rise to prominence occurred with Nathaniel P. Banks' election as Speaker of the House of Representatives during the 34th Congress. this event marked a significant milestone, often referred to as the "first Northern victory." However, the Republican faction within Congress did not constitute a majority initially. While they shared an anti-Democratic stance with various other groups, they faced fragmentation within the political landscape. At the commencement of the House proceedings, the political scene was characterized by division, with 79 Democrats, 37 Southern Whigs, and 117 representatives aligned with the Anti-Nebraska movement. The Republican contingent comprised only 46 members at this stage. Similar to other factions opposing the Nebraska Act, the Republicans were not yet a cohesive party but rather a coalition of dissent (Silbey, 1989).

2.4 Slavery, Antislavery and Political Parties

The publication of slave narratives, supported by abolitionist organizations, targeted a predominantly white middle-class audience, believed to possess the political influence necessary to challenge the institution of slavery. By vividly portraying brutal violence and sexual exploitation, these authors sought to shock their readers' sensibilities, demonstrating a sincere commitment to their political objectives (Ostrowski, 2006).

Research on women within the American anti-slavery movement has predominantly centered on radical abolitionist women. Whether explored through biographies, analyses of women's organizations, the narrative has largely revolved around radical abolitionism. Figures such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, Jane Grey Swisshelm, Clarina Irena Howard Nichols, Julia Louisa Lovejoy, Hannah Ropes, and Sara Robinson, often mischaracterized by historians as abolitionists, instead engaged with Republican or Free Soil party platforms, frequently engaging in public disputes with abolitionists. This study delves into the contributions of Harriet Beecher Stowe, Jane Grey Swisshelm, and Clarina I.H. Nichols to the anti-slavery political milieu, despite the obstacles preventing formal political engagement by women. Their involvement extended beyond what might be perceived as women's issues and encompassed substantive participation in challenging the constitutional stances of Free Soil and Republican party platforms, offering diverse rationales and timelines for abolition. Despite differing interpretations of constitutional principles and rhetorical approaches between men and women, both groups collaborated in pursuit of the shared objective of electing anti-slavery candidates (Pierson, 1998).

2.4.1 The Democrats and the Whigs Compromises over Slavery

When the Compromise measures of 1850 were formulated, northern Democrats, alongside southern Whigs, emerged as their primary advocates. Conversely, those Democrats who had shifted allegiance to the Free Soil party exhibited notably less enthusiasm. However, they

reluctantly accepted the agreement as a definitive resolution to the territorial dispute and subsequently rallied behind Franklin Pierce in the 1852 elections. Pierce, upon assuming office, confronted a conundrum: whether to exclude former Free Soilers from federal patronage and purge them from the party or to pursue a conciliatory approach aimed at unifying all factions, regardless of their prior affiliations. Opting for the latter path, Pierce's decision, much to the chagrin of factions like the New York Hunker, who felt entitled to exclusive patronage rewards for their unwavering support of the national party, exacerbated intraparty tensions in New York and other regions. Thus, despite the purported "finality" of the Compromise of 1850, internal party conflicts persisted (Ashworth, 2007).

During the congressional session spanning from December 1849 to October 1850, prominent figures from both moderate factions, such as Clay, Webster, Cass, and Douglas, collaborated to advocate for and ultimately enact a series of measures aimed at achieving a lasting resolution between the North and South. This legislative package comprised several supplementary provisions: the cessation of the slave trade in the District of Columbia to appease abolitionist sentiment, a more rigorous fugitive slave law to address the concerns of slaveholders, and the payment of ten million dollars to Texas in exchange for relinquishing its territorial claims over portions of New Mexico. Of particular significance were three main enactments: the admission of California as a free state, encompassing the entire Pacific coast region from Oregon to Mexico, spurred by the gold rush-driven influx of settlers; the establishment of Utah and New Mexico as territories without a prohibition on slavery, following the doctrine of Congressional nonintervention. Notably, the ultimate determination regarding the institution of slavery was deferred to the residents of these territories when drafting their constitutions and seeking statehood admission (Smith, 1906).

2.5 Political Parties and Immigrant Tide

The timeframe spanning from 1840 to 1860 constitutes a notable and significant segment within the broader narrative of nineteenth-century immigration. This epoch encapsulates the zenith of the initial major surge of migration that commenced in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, rendering it inherently intriguing. Moreover, it represents a period wherein immigrants played pivotal roles in shaping contemporary events, including the expansion into the Western frontier, the emergence of modern industrialization, and the socio-economic and political transformations that ultimately led to the Civil War (Ferrie, 1999).

During the pre-Civil War era, minimal immigrant settlement occurred in the Southern United States. Following Reconstruction, Southern leaders advocated for increased immigration, perceiving it as crucial for the region to achieve industrial parity with the North. However, endeavors to attract a greater influx of immigrants during the late 19th and early 20th centuries are widely documented as unsuccessful, indicating an inability to transcend the South's prevailing agricultural focus. Consequently, the South persisted as a subordinate region, subject to the influence of northeastern capitalism (Brandfon, 1964).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the political party system during the Antebellum Era was characterized by intense polarization, regional divisions, and the emergence of powerful ideological factions. The dominance of the Democratic and Whig parties, along with the rise of third-party movements such as the Free Soil and Know-Nothing parties, underscored the deep-seated social, economic, and ideological tensions that ultimately led to the outbreak of the Civil War. This period serves as a critical chapter in American political history, highlighting the complexities and challenges inherent in navigating the delicate balance between state sovereignty, federal authority, and the contentious

issue of slavery. As the nation grappled with these profound questions, the Antebellum Era laid the groundwork for the transformative political shifts that would shape the course of American history in the decades to come.

General Conclusion

This dissertation investigated the intricate formation of American political parties during the Antebellum period, a transformative time defined by substantial socioeconomic and political shifts. The study has been divided into two detailed chapters. The first chapter focused on the many expressions and reforms of the Antebellum period, while the second chapter looked at the development of the political party system during this era.

The first chapter examined how the Antebellum period was a crucible of change, marked by fast industrialization, urbanization, and the spread of democratic values. The Market Revolution significantly transformed the economic landscape, creating an environment ripe for political activism and reforms. Abolitionism, temperance, and women's rights were among the key social movements that evolved, fueled by a growing sense of progress and equality. These revolutions not only reshaped societal standards, but also had far-reaching consequences for political alliances and party strategies.

The second chapter delves further into the political party system of the Antebellum era. The Federalist Party declined during this time, while the Jacksonian Democrats and Whigs rose to prominence, reflecting the country's expanding sectional divisions and the difficult issue of slavery. The investigation highlighted how political parties were more structured and ideologically distinct, with defined platforms and well-organized voter mobilization campaigns. This chapter also emphasized the importance of significant political leaders and pivotal events, such as the fights over the Missouri Compromise and the Nullification Crisis, which influenced party politics and anticipated the Civil War.

The findings of this dissertation reveal that the Antebellum period was crucial in the formation and consolidation of the American political party system. The era's socio-economic changes and reform movements played a significant role in shaping party ideologies and voter bases. The emergence of well-defined political parties with distinct platforms was a response to the dynamic and often contentious political environment of the time.

In summary, the Antebellum era in American political party creation established the foundation for the current two-party system. In addition to influencing current party dynamics, the political, social, and economic changes of this era also left a lasting mark on the political landscape of the United States. This research adds to our understanding of the historical foundations of American political systems and offers insightful information on the intricate interactions between political evolution and socioeconomic reforms. The results highlight the significance of historical context in forming political systems and provide a starting point for future studies on the development of political parties during other pivotal junctures in American history.

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ملخص

تتناول هذه الأطروحة تطور الأحزاب السياسية الأمريكية خلال فترة ما قبل الحرب الأهلية، وهي فترة حرجية تميزت بتحويلات اجتماعية واقتصادية وسياسية عميقة. تهدف الدراسة إلى توضيح كيفية تأثير هذه التغيرات على تشكيل وتطور نظام الأحزاب السياسية في الولايات المتحدة. تم القيام بهذا البحث لمعالجة الثغرات في الدراسات الحالية التي غالباً ما تتغاضى عن الاتجاهات والإصلاحات الأوسع التي تشكل ديناميكيات الأحزاب. باستخدام منهجية البحث التاريخي. تعتمد الدراسة على مصادر أولية مثل الوثائق التاريخية والخطب والصحف، إلى جانب المصادر الثانوية بما في ذلك الكتب الأكاديمية والمقالات العلمية. التحليل في هذه الدراسة هو وصفي وتحليلي على حد سواء، حيث يقدم سرداً شاملاً للأحداث وأهميتها. يتناول الفصل الأول مظاهر وإصلاحات عصر ما قبل الحرب الأهلية، بما في ذلك توسيع حق الاقتراع، والتطورات الاقتصادية والحركات الاجتماعية. أما الفصل الثاني فيغوص في نظام الأحزاب السياسية خلال هذه الفترة، محلاً ظهور الأحزاب، ومنصاتها، واستجابتها للقضايا الرئيسية مثل العبودية وحقوق الولايات. تستنتج الدراسة أن فترة ما قبل الحرب الأهلية كانت محورية في تشكيل المشهد السياسي الأمريكي الحديث، حيث تم تشكيل أحزاب وأيديولوجيات جديدة لا تزال تؤثر على السياسة المعاصرة. تبرز النتائج أهمية السياق التاريخي في فهم الهياكل السياسية وتسهم في النقاشات المستمرة حول التطور السياسي والإصلاح.

الكلمات المفتاحية: فترة ما قبل الحرب الأهلية، الأحزاب السياسية، الإصلاحات، تاريخ الولايات المتحدة.