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## Political Realignments: How America Evolves

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Pappalardo: Political Realignment: How America Evolves

## Political Realignment: How America Evolves

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PO400- Political Science Capstone

Dr. Rose

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## I. Introduction

Pappalardo: Political Realignment: How America Evolves

The most prevalent theme in American politics is change. This idea of “change” is embodied through the people’s desire for social and economic progression. The nation’s unceasing inclination toward change shapes electoral behavior during a subsequent election, constantly evolving American foreign policy, prominent social issues, and economic advancement. The nation’s historical bipartisan system has facilitated electoral shifts that have been consequently defined as critical elections, or political realignments. These critical elections realigned the electorate from one party’s platform with inherent values, policies, and social positions, to another that felt progressively applicable for both the social and economic climate of the time. Virtually every political realignment that has occurred throughout history was both preceded and followed by preeminent historical events that undoubtedly swayed the electorate toward an adverse party or set of values. Furthermore, there is a viable cause-and-effect relationship surrounding political realignments, demonstrated through each shift of the electorate and its consecutive outcome. For example, the major realignment of the 1860 election and subsequent Presidency of Abraham Lincoln followed an electoral rift founded upon the abolishment of slavery, providing the groundwork for the cessation of the Confederate States and one of the bloodiest wars in our nation’s history. Additionally, realignments have caused the deterioration of parties, such as the Federalists and the Whigs, as well as the evolution of new parties and legislation, such as the GOP and the 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment, respectively. Contrary to theories working to disprove the existence of realignments in American political history, the goal of this research is to solidify their viability while exploring the indelible ramifications each electoral shift has had on the political, social, and economic climate of the nation. Beginning with the Jeffersonian Republicans of 1800 until the latter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, each significant partisan shift will be comprehensively analyzed in both

a historical and political context. Furthermore, the overarching theme of “change,” will be ubiquitous while answering the following questions: What causes political realignments to occur? What is the electorate’s role in causing a major realignment, and are there geographical factors of those inclinations? What do those realignments mean for the opposing party? How did previous realignments effect subsequent shifts? And how will past realignments effect potential future political polarizations?

## II. Political Realignment Theory

In an effort to properly analyze the questions presented above, it is critical to preliminarily define and explain what a political realignment is, and how the theory developed. Typically, a realignment has been historically recognized as the shift of the Northern Republicans and the Southern Democrats to the Northern Democrats and the Southern Republicans, however, the theory is much more that, and is viable on different occasions throughout our nation's political history. The concept of realignments, according to Bruce Campbell and Richard Trilling, is "applicable to the whole democratic process, the process in which the desires of the public are translated into public policy."<sup>1</sup> Similarly, according to Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, the very definition of democracy requires an alternation of power, stating political turnover is one of democracy's most essential facets.<sup>2</sup> By definition, a political realignment is just that: the replacement of a previously dominating coalition with a new party holding adverse values to that of its opponent's, resulting from a dramatic shift within the electorate, thus causing an alternation of power within American democracy. Although there are numerous definitions of political realignments, virtually all have overarching themes of being dramatic, often sudden, and provide theory of political change.<sup>3</sup> This change, according to various political scientists, is cyclical in nature. According to Walter Dean Burnham, political realignments occur every thirty to thirty-six years, while others argue that their onset can both be sudden (one to four years), or gradual (five to twenty years).<sup>4</sup> Additionally, it is believed that there is a "tipping point," of the electorate that

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce Campbell and Richard Trilling, *Realignment in American Politics: Toward a Theory* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1980), 2.

<sup>2</sup> Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, *Modernization: Theories and Facts* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 158.

<sup>3</sup> Peter F. Nardulli, "The Concept of a Critical Realignment, Electoral Behavior, and Political Change," *American Political Science Review* 89 (1995): 10.

<sup>4</sup> Nardulli, "The Concept of a Critical Realignment, Electoral Behavior, and Political Change," 17.

consequently causes a realignment. This tipping point is defined as “a point in time when a group, or a large number of group members, rapidly and dramatically changes its behavior by widely adopting a previously rare practice.”<sup>5</sup> Commonly used interchangeably with ideological polarizations, tipping points are not perpetual in every political realignment. A political realignment, however, is not to be confused with dealignment. A dealignment, conversely, is defined as “the trend or process whereby a large portion of the electorate abandons its previous partisan affiliation, without developing a new one to replace it.”<sup>6</sup> Conclusively, in order for a partisan shift to be defined as a political realignment, the electorate must abandon its current party in support of its opponent.

Now that a working definition for political realignment has been established, it is critical to explore how the theory was developed. The initial theory behind political realignments was introduced in 1955 by V.O. Key, Jr., in his work, *A Theory of Critical Elections*. Key introduces his theory by explaining the essential role of the voting populace, stating that the “position of the principle organ of governance” is embodied by the electorate, and demonstrated in a forthcoming election.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Key explains how the voting populace becomes psychologically involved in the electoral process through “attitudes associated with campaign cleavages, the nature of expectations about the consequences of voting, the impact of objective events relevant to individual political choice, and in individual sense of effective connection with community decision.”<sup>8</sup> Consequently, it is these motivating factors of the electorate that ultimately cause a political realignment to occur, especially in the instance of relative concern regarding a particular

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<sup>5</sup> Christian Reus-Smit and Robert E. Goodin, *Oxford Handbooks of Political Science* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 203.

<sup>6</sup> Reus-Smit and Goodin, *Oxford Handbooks of Political Science*, 203.

<sup>7</sup> V.O. Key, Jr., “A Theory of Critical Elections,” *The Journal of Politics* 17 (1955): 3.

<sup>8</sup> Key, “A Theory of Critical Elections,” 4.

candidate, as well as both economic and political events. As further described by Key, these economic events can include, “bank failures, railroad receiverships, unemployment, strikes, and deflation.”<sup>9</sup> Similarly, significant political events, such as wars, social positions, and diplomacy psychologically involve the electorate in aligning themselves with a party alternative to the one already in power.

Key further solidifies his theory by correlating both geography and socioeconomic status with subsequent realignments. Throughout each political realignment, there is an overarching theme of geography’s effect on the electoral values. In our nation’s earliest partisan shifts, there is an inclination of the urban electorate to align themselves with Democratic values until the notable realignment of 1896. To demonstrate the aligning of industrial cities to the Republican Party as opposed to the Democrats, Key compares the Election of 1892 to that of 1896. Upon blaming the gross unemployment rate on Democratic policies that resulted from the Presidency of Democrat Grover Cleveland, the urban electorate aligned themselves with the Republican Party during the Election of 1896, ultimately leading to the victory of 25th President, William McKinley. During this election, explains Key, the Democrats still held strong in the poor, immigrant sections of less-industrialized cities, however, the majority of “working-class ward,” chose to align themselves with the “party of prosperity,” or the Republicans.<sup>10</sup> The goal of the 1896 election, states Key, was to “reduce the degree of coincidence of class affiliation and partisan inclination,” removing, at least for a short time, the stigma of the urban electorate as Democratic voters.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, the Election of 1896 demonstrated the unified shift of both city and country voters. Previously, each geographical area aligned themselves with the Democrats and Republicans, respectively, until both

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<sup>9</sup> Key, “A Theory of Critical Elections,” 13.

<sup>10</sup> Key, “A Theory of Critical Elections,” 15.

<sup>11</sup> Key, “A Theory of Critical Elections,” 15.



electorates felt heightened anxieties about free trade, inflation, and Western exploration.<sup>12</sup> Key, focusing on the urban versus country electorate of New England, explains voters “instead of sharpening class cleavages within New England, the voting apparently reflected more a sectional antagonism and anxiety, shared by all classes.”<sup>13</sup> The role of cities in an election will be analyzed in the context of each historical realignment, however, the presentation of Key’s thesis on geography, socioeconomic status, and alignments provides a foundation for partisan shifts.

The ultimate goal of V.O. Key, Jr.’s theory on political realignments is to establish a demonstrable relationship between electoral behavior and political systems. He maintains that although the electorate is “large and diverse,” and “encompasses radically varying types of behavior,” a dominant characteristic, or value, becomes apparent through the analysis of each election.<sup>14</sup> Conclusively, Key suggests that studying historical partisan shifts provides a tool in discovering electoral values, needs, and desires, usable for forthcoming elections. Key’s political realignment theory, however, has not been comprehensively recognized by the political science community. Conversely, there are theories that work to disprove realignments as valuable, or even existent. David Mayhew, political scientist at Yale University, invalidated Key’s theory in his work, *Electoral Realignments: A Critique of an American Genre*. Mayhew takes the favorable claims made by Key and other various political scientists, and “proves” that they are empirically insignificant. Foremost, he states that dichotomizing elections as critical and non-critical is largely fallacious. He solidifies this argument by claiming that desired change by the electorate should not be measured by a singular partisan shift, but rather by “a mixture of large, medium, and small

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<sup>12</sup> Key, “A Theory of Critical Elections,” 16.

<sup>13</sup> Key, “A Theory of Critical Elections,” 16.

<sup>14</sup> Key, “A Theory of Critical Elections,” 18.

effects” changing behaviors have on electoral outcomes.<sup>15</sup> Next, Mayhew explains that the aforementioned thirty-year realignment cycle is invalid, maintaining that the nation’s political, social, and economic climate is ever-changing, and thus cannot be measured by a predetermined scale. Furthermore, argues Mayhew, it is proximate, defining events that grossly effect electoral behavior as opposed to using historical shifts as an explanation for incumbent realignments. These events, and subsequent tensions and anxieties, he argues, promote greater voter turnout that can ultimately spark a realignment. Additionally, claims Mayhew, ideological polarization is not viable in every noted realignment, citing the Elections of 1860, 1896, and 1932 as examples. Mayhew also denounces the ideology that political realignments bring about major policy change and redistribution, claiming their lack of presence in every partisan shift makes the argument consequently dubious.<sup>16</sup> Lastly, he states that realigning elections are not exclusively national, but also local.

Mayhew’s arguments will be comprehensively disproved throughout the following research, however, preliminary responses are critical in maintaining the validity of historical political realignments. His first remark regarding the dichotomy between critical and non-critical elections is easily confounded by analyzing the continuation of partisan regimes as opposed to shifts. In order for a political realignment to occur, there must be a comprehensive discontent between the electorate and the current party. The continuation of a regime, conversely, results from content with the current President and ruling party, therefore, the desire for drastic change in policy is not present. How can an election be “critical” if social and economic policies will remain largely untouched? Similarly, a political realignment is defined a sudden, drastic change in the electorate’s

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<sup>15</sup> David Mayhew, *Electoral Realignments: A Critique of an American Genre* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 25.

<sup>16</sup> Mayhew, *Electoral Realignments: A Critique of an American Genre*, 37.

behavior, ultimately causing their aligning with the opposing party. Looking again to the election of 1896, Democrats historically held the majority in industrialized cities prior to the election of Republican William McKinley. The shift of the voting populace was unexpected, and was not something that could have been effectively measured prior to the election process. It is agreeable, however, that some discontent for the incumbent party can be systematically measured, however, that does not ascertain that a realignment will indefinitely occur. The thirty-year cycle as presented by Walter Dean Burnham is not representative of all political theories involving realignments. As aforementioned, the social, political, and economic climate in the nation is ever-changing: technological developments, generational divides, and the desire for a progressive nation can prove cyclical, however, defining it to thirty years can also prove fallacious. Another critical facet when studying political realignments is to recognize that history often repeats itself. Electoral mistakes that resulted in the loss of an election can be repeated in similar context, hence why political science is founded upon precedent. Additionally, the fact that defining national, or even foreign, events that induce greater voter turnout and electoral anxiety, is not to say that perpetual voters do not experience a shift in political and social values resulting from these events. Similarly, there does not need to be a complete ideological polarization to induce a major realignment. It is critical to recognize that political realignments are not exclusively founded upon ideological polarizations, but rather on comprehensive discontent on the incumbent and their failing policies. Furthermore, a realigning election does not always induce a candidate that promotes major policy change or redistribution, but rather fixes what is broken within already-established programs. Lastly, in response to Mayhew, it is agreeable that local realignments can occur, however, the national discontent that consequently results in a shift in partisan support has a widespread effect of foreign, economic, and social policy.

### III. The Rise of the Jeffersonian Republicans

The quadrennial Presidential election in the newly-formed United States proved to be our nation's first notable political realignment. The Election of 1800, sometimes noted as the "Revolution of 1800," introduced mudslinging, personal insults, and the threat of political collapse at the very obtainment of independence, as well as the ultimate establishment of the 12<sup>th</sup> Amendment.<sup>17</sup> On the Democratic Republican ticket was Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr, while the Federalists nominated incumbent President John Adams and his running-mate, Charles Pinckney. The Presidency, following a rather tumultuous election, was ultimately decided by the House of Representatives, handing the victory to the Democratic Republicans, realigning the electorate from the dominating Federalist Party. The Election of 1800 was essentially a rematch of 1796, rehashing most of the previously argued party platforms. Of these platforms and disputed issues was the Democratic Republicans' pro-decentralization of the government and pro-French attitudes vis-a-vis the Federalists' opposing pro-centralization and pro-British agenda, the Alien and Sedition Acts, the XYZ Affair, and the newly-implemented tax to fund the mobilization of the army and navy. The Federalists maintained that the Democratic Republicans were radicals seeking to destroy the newly-established government of the nation. Conversely, the Democratic Republicans claimed the Federalists were questionably favorable of the British, with prospects of reestablishing anti-Democratic and aristocratic policies.<sup>18</sup> The victory of the Democratic Republicans is historically attributed to the ultimate demise of the Federalist Party, cultivating the electorate's values within the platform of the newly-elected coalition for two decades. By comprehensively exploring the Election of 1800, a primordial climate of the nation will be

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<sup>17</sup> Joanne Freeman, "The Presidential Election of 1800: A Story of Crisis, Controversy, and Change," *The Journal of the Gilder Lehrman Institute* (2001), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Freeman, "The Presidential Election of 1800: A Story of Crisis, Controversy, and Change," 1.

established, the nature of the election will be discussed thoroughly, and its subsequent outcome will be examined in the context of political realignment theory.

The election and political realignment of 1800 came as a result of Federalist John Adams' Presidency and failing policies. Our nation's third President upheld the stringent ideologies of the Federalist Party, boasting a strong central government and the nationalization of banking. Adams' anti-French attitude resulted in the XYZ Affair and the subsequent Quasi-War with France that ultimately caused the President to increase both taxes and the size of the navy to effectively fund and combat the conflict, respectively. The President ultimately transformed republican America's previously pro-French sentiment to a more pro-British, anti-French mentality, creating a shift of alliances. Adams' downfall, however, came alongside his support of the Alien and Sedition Acts, a piece of legislation that he claimed protected Americans from "enemy" aliens and anti-government rhetoric.<sup>19</sup> The Federalist-backed laws allowed for the government to deport immigrants, and also introduced draconian regulations that inhibited "non-Americans" from voting. The sedition portion of the legislation disallowed for public opposition to the central government, stating that no American was to "write, print, utter, or publish . . . any false, scandalous and malicious writing."<sup>20</sup> Finally, prior to the culmination of his Presidency, Adams opened negotiations with France much to the dismay of his party. Pioneer of the Federalist Party, Alexander Hamilton, publicly denounced Adams' decision, claiming it was the reason for the Federalists' defeat in the Election of 1800. John Adams entered the election without support from most of his party and with his policies heavily scrutinized by his Democratic Republican opponents. Our nation's first major political realignment was on the periphery.

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<sup>19</sup> C. James Taylor, "John Adams: Impact and Legacy," *Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia* (2016), 1, <http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/acadfest/2017/all/21>

<sup>20</sup> Taylor, "John Adams: The Impact and Legacy," 1.

The Democratic Republican Party, coined as the “Jeffersonian Republicans,” used the failures of the Adams Administration to create a dynamic platform that would ultimately gain Thomas Jefferson the Presidency. Adams’ reelection campaign, however, echoed most of the values demonstrated in the Election of 1796. Historically, the Democratic Republicans were supportive of states’ rights as opposed to the structural pro-centralized government the Federalists were attempting to proliferate during the Adams Presidency. Conversely, the Jeffersonian Republicans “believed in strict interpretation of the Constitution, limited central government, and a small national military,” in addition to promoting the interests of trade laborers and small businesses, a value that was largely appealing to the plantation South.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Jefferson maintained that banking was to remain under the power of the states, as opposed to the Federalists’ national banking system. In regard to taxes, the Democratic Republicans “favored the existence of protective tariffs both as a means of protecting domestic production and as a source of revenue.”<sup>22</sup> The Jeffersonian Republicans also largely condemned the Alien and Sedition Acts, deeming them destructive to the Constitution and to individual rights. Adams’ platform in 1800, however, continued to uphold the Alien and Sedition Acts, a decision historically looked upon as the tipping point on the eve of a realigning election. Additionally, the party also saw a more democratic sentiment in the French following their revolution, hoping to reintroduce the pro-French attitudes previously admonished by Adams’ quasi French-American war. Conversely, the Federalists labeled Thomas Jefferson and the Democratic Republicans as “un-Christian deists,” claiming their support of the French would induce domestic chaos, an ideology that eventually proved electorally unpopular.<sup>23</sup> Lastly, the Democratic Republicans gained the backing from one of the most

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<sup>21</sup> Sonia Benson, et al., “The Democratic-Republican Party,” *UXL Encyclopedia of U.S. History* 2 (2009), 435.

<sup>22</sup> Benson, et al., “The Democratic-Republican Party,” 435-436.

<sup>23</sup> John C. Miller, *The Federalist Era: 1789-1901* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), 273.

politically prominent Americans, James Madison. He joined Jefferson's coalition during the election, becoming one of the Administration's most valuable organizers.

At the culmination of the election, discontent with Adams' Administration proved too great to warrant him a reelection. Thomas Jefferson and the Democratic Republicans swept Congress, the House of Representatives, and the Electoral College with a sixty-five to thirty-nine majority among Senate electors.<sup>24</sup> The controversy of the Election of 1800, however, was not in identifying what party won the Presidency, but rather if Thomas Jefferson or his running-mate, Aaron Burr, was to become our nation's next President upon receiving the same number of votes in the electoral college. Ultimately, the House of Representatives decided the President in a single-vote decision, naming Jefferson as the victor, an era historically designated as the "Virginia Dynasty."<sup>25</sup>

Aside from Adams' failing policies and ruinous political decisions, a shift in the electorate's interests and evolving values impeded the Federalist Party's ability to remain in power, and allowed for the Democratic Republicans to thrive. Prior to the election, the Jeffersonian Republicans' support came mostly from states' rights activists, ultimately growing to encompass merchants, urban workers, and artisans; a populace that was once aligned with the Federalists.<sup>26</sup> Looking at the election from a geo-political context, Jefferson's ideologies regarding the interests of workers was appealing to the South's agrarian economy, causing them to align themselves with the new coalition as opposed to the old one. Demonstrated on the subsequent map with the blue states indicating Jefferson's victories and the green representing Adams' electoral votes, Jefferson and his coalition unanimously dominated the southern states, a shock too great to achieve a Federalist reelection.

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<sup>24</sup> Miller, *The Federalist Era: 1789-1901*, 298.

<sup>25</sup> Benson, et al., "The Democratic-Republican Party," 436.

<sup>26</sup> Benson, et al., *The Democratic-Republican Party*, 436.



Additionally, Jefferson appealed to Western states because of his candid support of expansionism and exploration, another achieved electorate that is demonstrated on the map. The values of Jeffersonian democracy appropriately conformed to that of the American people. At the dawn of independence, the electorate did not want the extractive, centralized government advertised by the Federalists. A coalition that essentially overturned their right to free speech, and disallowed for immigrant participation in a nation that was founded upon inclusion. Instead, the populace realigned themselves with a progressive Administration that promised the “change” sought after since the American Revolution.

Following the Election of 1800, the presence of the Federalist Party increasingly disintegrated, leading to its ultimate demise following the War of 1812 without a replacing coalition. The Democratic Republicans, however, remained politically preeminent for the subsequent twenty-five years until its own internal ideological divisions began to form. Our nation’s first political realignment demonstrates how an Administration’s insufficient and detrimental policies can motivate the electorate to realign themselves with the more progressive coalition, ultimately leading to the collapse of a previously-dominant party.



#### IV. The Age of Jackson Academic Festival, Event 21 [2017]

The election that became known as “the champion of the common people” and the “rebirth of the American two-party system” resulted from a tumultuous contest between Democrat Andrew Jackson and incumbent President and National Republican, John Quincy Adams.<sup>27</sup> Following the factionalizing of the Democratic Republicans in the 1820s, Andrew Jackson and his supporters formed their own Democratic Party with policies aimed at the betterment of the common man. The Election of 1828 was essentially a rematch of the 1824 election in which John Quincy Adams gained the Presidency from the House of Representatives over Andrew Jackson. Both Jackson’s bitter feelings from the previous election and the growing support of his newly-formed coalition motivated him to run on a platform boasting suffrage rights, Western expansionism, a patronage system, Laissez-Faire economic policies, a limited central government, and opposition to the reestablishment of a national bank.<sup>28</sup> The Presidency of John Quincy Adams was largely criticized for alleged corruption and Federal overreach, especially from Jacksonian Democrats. Most of the policies he presented were eradicated in Congress, leaving him with few administrative accomplishments throughout his single term as President. In the Election of 1828, Jackson used Adams’ lack of progression and allegations of corruption as a mechanism to realign the electorate from the National Republicans to the Jacksonian Democrats, a coalition that ultimately dominated for two decades. Compared often to Jeffersonian Democracy and the Virginia Dynasty, Andrew Jackson and his Administration were viewed as the most applicably progressive for the era, promising an inclusive economic system without Federal overreach, and the exploration of widely-desired Western territories. The political realignment of 1828 demonstrates a geo-political shift in

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<sup>27</sup> Lynn Hudson Parsons, *The Birth of Modern Politics: Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and the Election of 1828* (London: Oxford University Press, 2009), 27.

<sup>28</sup> Parsons, *The Birth of Modern Politics: Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and the Election of 1828*, 165.  
<http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/acadfest/2017/all/21>

the electorate with a transition of values, as well as the formation of an anti-Jacksonian party, known as the Whigs, that proved politically relevant for a significant portion of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As previously stated, Andrew Jackson deemed himself a pioneer of the common man's economic, political, and social interests, something he argued Adams callously ignored. He wanted to limit the power of the Federal government, giving a "voice" back to the people. Jackson valued an economy consistent of artisans, merchants, and small farmers, claiming it was those laborers that provided the American economy with "virtue and independence."<sup>29</sup> These ideologies regarding the proliferation of agrarian economies gained him unsurmountable support in Southern states. Jacksonian Democrats also feared the concentration of capital and power promoted by both the growing corporate sector and the potential reestablishment of a national bank. Furthermore, in response to Adams' policies favoring extensive public works and the development of widespread infrastructure, Jackson argued that it was merely demonstrative of big government tactics.<sup>30</sup> Jackson also maintained that, in an effort to avoid corruption, office-holders within the government must be systematically rotated to limit their terms, a platform predominantly advertised in the context of Adams' Corrupt Bargain Scandal of 1824. Jackson's reformist economic and political platform gained him the support of the aforementioned common man, as well as a number of prominent politicians. Also disappointed by the outcome of the 1824 election, New York Senator Martin Van Buren joined the Jacksonian coalition, in hopes of creating a North and South state alliance that would secure Jackson the Presidency.<sup>31</sup> Lastly, aside from the absence of Adams' administrative achievements, was the defamation of his opponent's character. The Adams

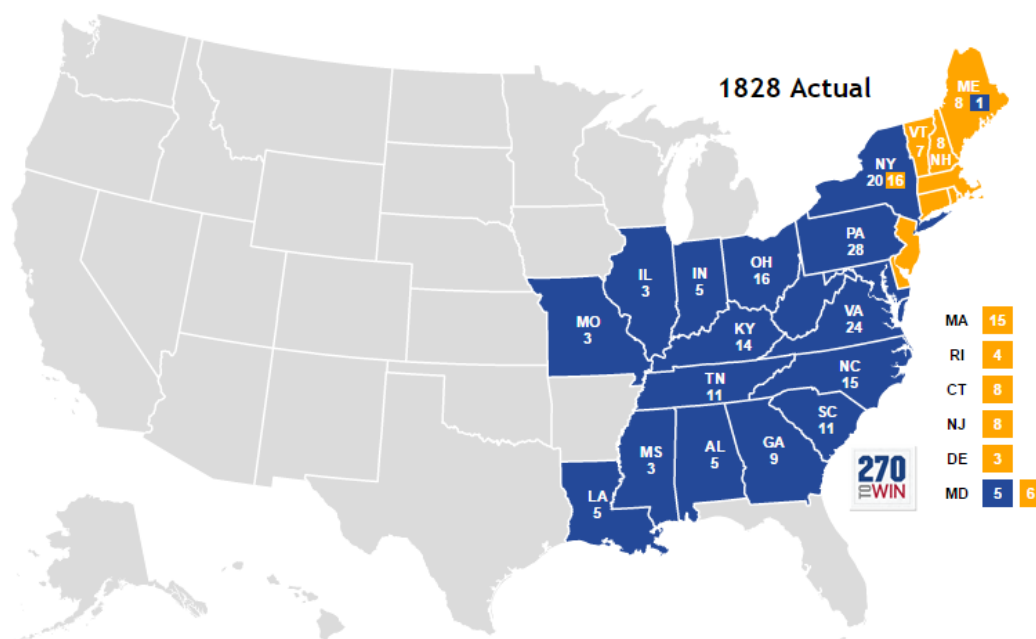
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<sup>29</sup> Parsons, *The Birth of Modern Politics: Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and the Election of 1828*, 38.

<sup>30</sup> Parsons, *The Birth of Modern Politics: Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and the Election of 1828*, 39.

<sup>31</sup> Parsons, *The Birth of Modern Politics: Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and the Election of 1828*, 39.

campaign both explicitly and publicly labeled Jackson a murderer, adulterer, drunkard, and gambler, a political “technique” that proved largely unappealing to the electorate.<sup>32</sup>



Following months of mudslinging and personal conflict, the Election of 1828 had culminated, and the electorate chose Andrew Jackson for the Presidency. The Jacksonian Democrats won the Electoral College with 178 votes while claiming 647,286 popular votes.<sup>33</sup> Conversely, the incumbent President trailed with 83 electoral votes and 508,064 popular votes.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, the electorate became progressively motivated since the Election of 1824, increasing voter turnout by a staggering 800,000 men.<sup>35</sup> Indicated in the map above with the blue states representing Jackson and the yellow indicating Adams, the Democrats unanimously swept both the Southern and Western states while the National Republicans clinged onto New England, New Jersey, and Delaware. Consumed with Adams’ big business policies, the South wanted a candidate

<sup>32</sup> Parsons, *The Birth of Modern Politics: Andrew Jackson, John Quincy Adams, and the Election of 1828*, 41.

<sup>33</sup> John Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America: 1828-1996* (Boston University, 2001), 63.

<sup>34</sup> Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America: 1828-1996*, 64.

<sup>35</sup> Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America: 1828-1996*, 64.

that would implement reform, echoing an agrarian economic climate. Similarly, Western states, still keen on the expansionist ideology presented by Jefferson in the realignment of 1800, desired policies that would keep exploration and expansion viable in the subsequent Presidency. Although close in electoral votes, Jackson ultimately won the state of New York with the help of Van Buren, gaining him the support of a major port city. In addition to New York, Jackson also won the support of other growing cities, such as St. Louis, Missouri and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, providing him with an urban leverage over Adams.

The realigning election of 1828 shifted the electorate from the inadequate National Republicans to the inclusively progressive Democrats. Not only did the Jacksonians increase voter turnout exponentially, but they also set precedent for many of the common practices still used in American government today. In an effort to maintain a system of checks and balances on the Federal government, terms were now placed on serving office-holders, allowing for the people to systematically have a voice in choosing their policymakers. The proliferation of big business economics was impeded to allow for both agrarian economies and merchants to thrive. Furthermore, the election was defined as a notable realignment for its geo-political outcome, claiming both the West and the South as a Democratic populace for decades to come. In the Election of 1824, Southern states, except Georgia, largely supported Jackson, while the West was divided among the other candidates. As noted by many scholars, the Election of 1828 consequentially gave birth to the “Southern Democrats,” a relentless voting coalition that would not be broken until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, the subsequent formation of the Whig Party in opposition to the Democrats maintained the American two-party system, one that mirrors the precedent of an explicit partisan division as rooted in the Election of 1828.

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<sup>36</sup> Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America: 1828-1996*, 67.

## V. **Republicans in Power** Academic Festival, Event 21 [2017]

During the reign of the Democrats following the realignment of 1828, the issue of slavery grew to divide the nation both politically and ethically. During the Presidency of James Buchanan, Northern abolitionists expanded exponentially, while a pro-slavery sentiment remained in most of the Southern states. Buchanan himself did not morally agree with slavery, however, he considered the practice protected under the Constitution. The promotion of slavery as a right under the American Constitution was demonstrated in both legislation and decisions of the Supreme Court during the Buchanan Era, most notably the controversial *Dred Scott v. Sanford* precedent. Although he tried to maintain the unity of the nation in such a divisive time, seven states seceded from the Union during Buchanan's tenure.<sup>37</sup> The nation, on the brink of Civil War, desired a candidate that would effectively hinder the national conflict that was on the periphery. The Republican Party, formed by former Whigs and opponents to slavery, had prospects of realigning the electorate with their more moderate candidate, Abraham Lincoln. The Republican nominee, looked upon as the embodiment of a hard-worker and the American dream, was tasked with securing both the Northern states and the faltering Mid-Atlantic States. The Southern Democrats, in response to Buchanan's retraction for reelection, nominated the incumbent Vice-President John C. Breckinridge to assure the protection of slavery as a continued American institution. The Election of 1860 has been defined as a major political realignment for both the culmination of a thirty-year Democratic reign and for establishing the Northern Republicans as the conclusive adversary of the Southern Democrats for years to come. Additionally, the two-party system reintroduced in the previous realignment was briefly halted, and the Constitutional Union Party, a mixture of the defunct Whig, the Know Nothing, and the Opposition Parties, led by nominee, John

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<sup>37</sup> <http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/acadfest/2017/all/21>  
 Michael S. Green, *Lincoln and the Election of 1860* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2011), 19.

Bell, could keep the nation from falling into civil war with its more “moderate” stance on slavery.<sup>38</sup> This division remained viable until the latter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and put Republicans into the White House for over two decades. The values of the electorate embodied in the Election of 1860 shaped American politics into the modern-day, proving to be more than a critical election.

In the early 1860s, the Democratic Party split following their conflicting attitudes regarding the future of slavery, thus splitting into two factions: the Northern Democrats and the Southern Democrats. The Northern Democrats, led by moderate Stephen A. Douglas, favored slavery as a state-regulated institution, promoting the ideology of popular sovereignty. He also openly opposed the Fugitive Slave Act, legislation that mandated the capture of escaped slaves and thus denied their right to a jury trial once captured, deeming it both unconstitutional and unethical.<sup>39</sup> Alternatively, the Southern Democrats, led by John C. Breckinridge and backed by incumbent President Buchanan, promoted the controversial Fugitive Slave Act and maintained that slavery remained federally regulated, giving the right of holding slaves to every territory. The Republican platform, however, promised to impede the extension of slavery into the territories, and explicitly denounced the “recent re-opening of the African Slave Trade... a crime against humanity... and we call upon Congress to take prompt and efficient measures for the total and final suppression of that execrable traffic.”<sup>40</sup> Additionally, Lincoln and the Republicans largely criticized the Kansas-Nebraska Act, legislation that rescinded the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and allowed both states to individually decide the allowance of slavery within their respective borders. The Constitutional Union Party, promoting “the Union as it is, and the Constitution as it is,” generally concerned

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<sup>38</sup> Green, *Lincoln and the Election of 1860*, 23.

<sup>39</sup> Green, *Lincoln and the Election of 1860*, 24.

<sup>40</sup> Green, *Lincoln and the Election of 1860*, 26.

themselves in preserving the Union with the goal of disallowing the conflict of slavery to partition the Northern states.

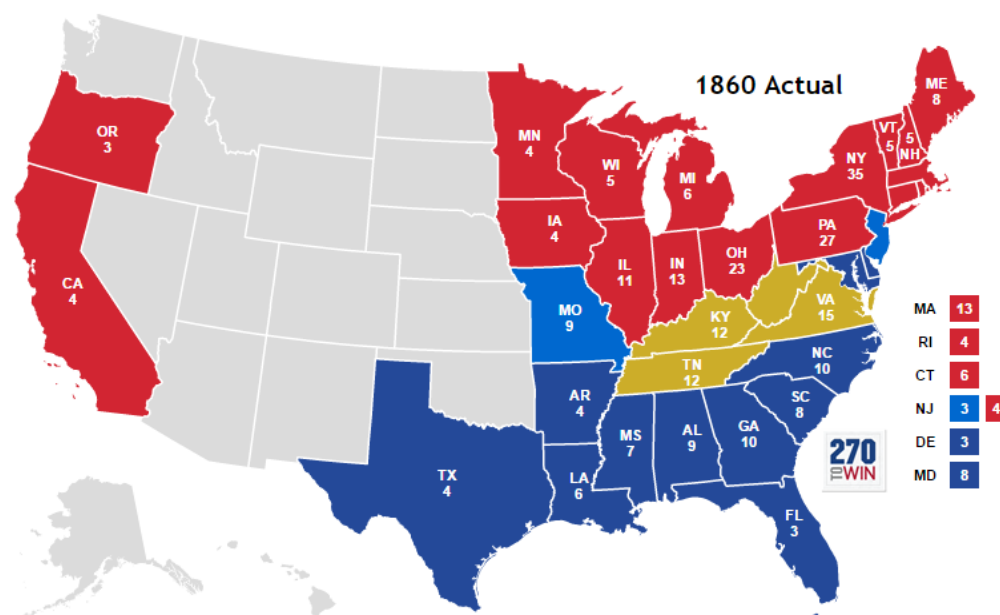
Aside from the issues posed by slavery and national division, both the Democrats and Republicans demonstrated differing values in many of the other affairs of the time. During his tenure, Buchanan favored the annexation of Cuba by America, with prospects of declaring it a slave state. Both the Northern and Southern Democrats favored the annexation, but for contrasting reasons. Similar to Buchanan's prospects, the Southern Democrats viewed Cuba as a potential slave state, while the Northern Democrats supported the annexation solely under amicable terms between America and Spain. The Republicans remained largely indifferent on the Cuban prospects, focusing more on disputed domestic affairs. Instead, Lincoln promoted the implementation of tariffs that would protect growing industry and their laborers. The Republicans also favored the Homestead Act, legislation previously vetoed by President Buchanan that would grant farmers free land in the expanding Western territories. Lastly, the Republican candidate favored the funding of a transcontinental railroad that would connect the East to the then-West. Lincoln maintained that a national railroad would enhance domestic trade, and allow for Eastern Americans to populate Western territories. Conversely, the Democrats, mirroring the values of Andrew Jackson, were weary on such a vast federal expenditure to boast internal improvement, thus removing it from their platform. <sup>41</sup>

Following months of debate, national division, and threats of cessation, America, on the brink of war, chose their next President. With 180 electoral votes and 40% of the popular vote, Republican Abraham Lincoln became the nation's 16<sup>th</sup> President. Breckinridge and the Southern Democrats trailed with 72 electoral votes, winning key Southern states. Bell's Constitutional

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<sup>41</sup> Green, *Lincoln and the Election of 1860*, 30. <http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/acadfest/2017/all/21>

Union Party, although appealing exclusively to “border states,” secured 39 electoral votes, with, however, the lowest percentage of the popular vote. Douglas’ Northern Democrats, lagging well behind the Southern Democrats, only won 12 electoral votes although gaining the second-most popular votes.<sup>42</sup> The graph below depicts the states won by respective candidate, demonstrating the red state versus blue state electoral phenomena seen in modern elections. The red states are demonstrative of Lincoln’s victories, while blue states are representative of Democratic states: dark blue indicating Breckinridge and light blue depicting Douglas. The gold states show the electorate won by Bell, reiterating his victory of only Border States. As shown on the map, Lincoln



unanimously swept both the Northern and Western states. The Western electorate, enthralled by Lincoln’s endorsement of the Homestead Act, desired the candidate that would promote interests of Western settlement, especially one that was free. Both the Southern and Northern Democrats, as previously stated, did not favor the “free soil” ideology promoted by the Republicans, demanding that the land was not to be freely settled by farmers. Northern states embodied their

<sup>42</sup> Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America: 1828-1996*, 105.



anti-slavery interests by endorsing the Republican Party's platform to eradicate both the proliferation of slavery in newly-acquired territories and the existence of the African slave trade. Lincoln, even following Buchanan's endorsement of the Southern Democrats to secure the state of Pennsylvania, won the state virtually unanimously. The Northern Democrats barely secured New Jersey and Missouri, almost losing the electorate to Lincoln and Breckinridge, respectively. New Jersey had historically been a state on a tipping point between Republican and Democratic values. Interestingly, the northern portion of the state leaned Democratic, while the southern portion proved Republican. The border states of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee, as well as the West Virginian territory, favored Bell and his pro-Union, pro-Constitution ideologies. The electorate in those states, however, were not unanimously aligned to Bell. Most counties within the aforementioned states leaned Southern Democrat, with others feared a complete division of the nation the other candidates were broaching. Finally, Breckinridge and the Southern Democrats swept the Deep South, maintaining that a Lincoln presidency would undoubtedly admonish the institution of slavery, thus decimating their plantation economy.

The Election of 1860 is regarded a notable political realignment for the precedent it has set for subsequent elections. As aforementioned, the election was the first time the red state versus blue state phenomena evident in American politics. In modern elections, partisan values are demonstrated geographically through these electoral maps. Furthermore, the geographical divide between the Republicans and Democrats proved the most palpable at that point of American political history. Additionally, the Election of 1860 removed the multi-decade long power from the Democrats, allocating it to the newly-formed Republican Party for more than twenty years to come. Although the dual party system was viable in previous elections, the Election of 1860 introduced the two parties that currently dominate American politics: the Democrats and the

Republicans. Their values may have evolved since their respective introduction, however, the partisan divide of the nation remains largely prevalent. The outcome of the election induced the cessation of the Southern states, particularly those that supported both Breckinridge and Bell, and subsequently began the bloodiest war in American history. The electorate, however, was realigned from the pro-slavery values of the Democratic Party fronted by President Buchanan, evolving to the anti-slavery, inclusive Democracy led by Abraham Lincoln. The Presidency of Lincoln is thus attributed to the end of slavery, and the introduction of African Americans into the American electorate.

## VI. City versus Country Academic Festival, Event 21 [2017]

The reign of the Republicans lasted until the Presidency of Chester Arthur and the subsequent election of Democrat Grover Cleveland. Throughout Cleveland's tenure, he considered himself both as a reformist and noninterventionist, and worked to lower the high protective tariffs implemented by his predecessors.<sup>43</sup> During his nonconsecutive second term, Cleveland was faced with a national financial crisis that was crippling the economy, also known as the Panic of 1893. The nation was facing railroad bankruptcy, failing banks as the result of a credit crisis, a stock market crash, and an exponential rise in the unemployment rate.<sup>44</sup> Although the economy began to recover at the cusp of the Election of 1896, Cleveland's indecisive social positions marked him largely unfavorable by the electorate. Regarding social inclusion, he denounced the discrimination of Chinese laborers in the West, but excoriated both women's suffrage and civil rights for African-Americans, while promoting the ideology that Native Americans must assimilate to American culture. Following Cleveland's ineffective Presidency, a realigning election that ended the old Third Party System and consequently introduced the Fourth Party System was underway.<sup>45</sup> Republican nominee and former Governor of Ohio, William McKinley and his eastern establishment coalition became known as the stay-at-home candidate for his refusal to partake in campaign banter. McKinley's opponent, however, became known as the "boy orator" and the "great commoner" of American politics, making an unprecedented amount of speeches on his campaign trail.<sup>46</sup> Also known for his pioneering of silver-backed currency, Democratic nominee William Jennings Bryan represented the common man whose success had been impeded by the

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<sup>43</sup> R. Hal Williams, *Realigning America: McKinley, Bryan, and the Remarkable Election of 1896* (University Press of Kansas, 2010), 19.

<sup>44</sup> Williams, *Realigning America: McKinley, Bryan, and the Remarkable Election of 1896*, 21.

<sup>45</sup> Williams, *Realigning America: McKinley, Bryan, and the Remarkable Election of 1896*, 22.

<sup>46</sup> Williams, *Realigning America: McKinley, Bryan, and the Remarkable Election of 1896*, 23.

rich Eastern establishment that supported his adversary. The election, for the first time in political history, placed the city electorate versus the country, with each candidate capitalizing off of their respective interests. The Election of 1896 became known as one the most unparalleled elections of American history, as well as a notable realignment for the precedents set by simply the election itself.

William McKinley's platform demonstrated ideologies that were virtually opposite to that of William Jennings Bryan. Financially, McKinley favored a bimetallic system with a prominent gold standard, mandating that gold be "the sole basis for redeeming paper."<sup>47</sup> Additionally, he supported the reimplementation of protective tariffs in an effort to both preserve domestic industry while hindering foreign competition and provide the government with workable fiscal revenues. Furthermore, the Republican candidate promoted the development of the United States as a powerful member of the world stage. McKinley also favored the annexation of Hawaii as a member of the United States, while promulgating the construction of a transnational canal in Central America. The Republicans recommended the expansion of the American Navy, as well as the development of a board of arbitration with a goal of resolving labor disputes. In regard to social issues, McKinley favored commensurate rights for women in the context of equal work and pay, but called for the restriction of illiterate immigrants into the United States.

The Republicans led by candidate William McKinley introduced remarkable campaign strategies that were never before seen by American politics. Following the growing acclamation of Bryan and his platform, McKinley and his campaign advisor, Mark Hanna, financed the campaign through the fundraising and bargaining with lucrative American businesses. Hanna suggested that the economic success of their business would surely be destroyed under a Bryan

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<sup>47</sup> Williams, *Realigning America: McKinley, Bryan, and the Remarkable Election of 1896*, 33.

Presidency, ultimately allowing for the campaign to raise \$3.5 million in funds.<sup>48</sup> The Republican Party also painted the picture of Bryan as a religious fanatic with rhetoric that would prove damaging to both the economy and American Democracy. In one instance, the Republicans depicted Bryan on fake currency with the caption, “IN GOD WE TRUST...FOR THE OTHER 53 CENTS.”<sup>49</sup>

As noted by American historians, William Jennings Bryan was controversial in both his policies and his rhetoric. Bryan regarded McKinley as a puppet, claiming his interest lied only in the proliferation of big business, while him, on the other hand, promoted blue-collar workers. Becoming nominated upon his preeminent Cross of Gold speech, Bryan favored the disestablishment of the gold standard and the introduction of a silver-based economic system, gaining him support from the Populist Party. Bryan also propagated pro-inflation rhetoric, stating it would resurrect once-prosperous farmers from their crippling debts. The Democrats recognized that the Northeast and their densely populated cities would be virtually impossible to secure from McKinley. Consequently, Bryan’s pro-blue-collar platform compelled them to campaign tirelessly in the Midwestern states, claiming that electorate would undoubtedly secure them a win against McKinley. Focused predominantly on economic issues, Bryan reticent regarding the social issues of the times. African-Americans were often excluded from his rhetoric, however, he remained tolerant of the Ku Klux Klan throughout most of his political career.<sup>50</sup>

The “boy orator,” although traveling in excess of 18,000 miles throughout his campaign, endured a bitter defeat from the Republicans and William McKinley. The election achieved a 90%

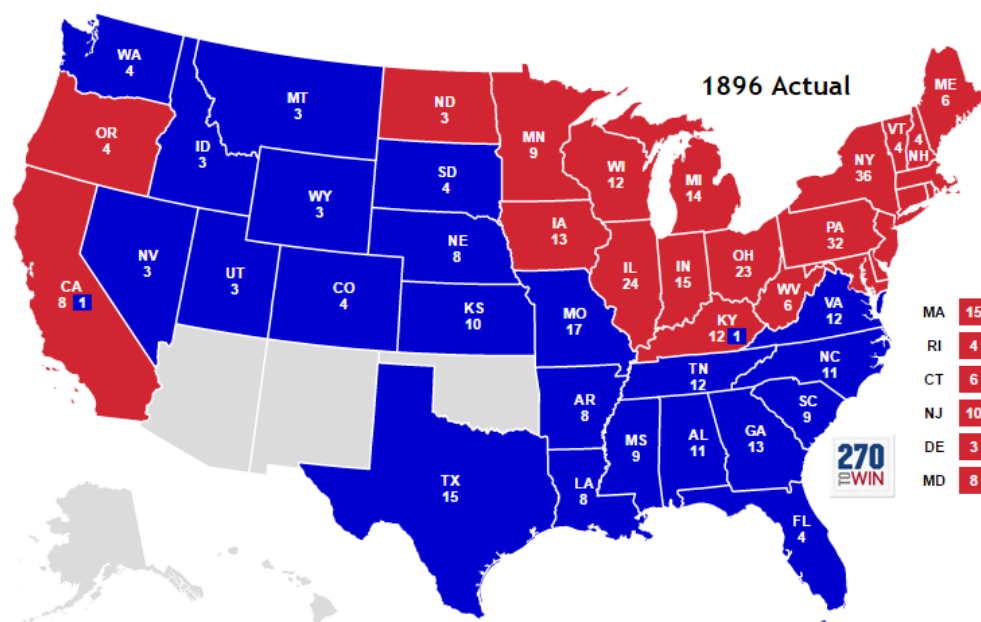
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<sup>48</sup> Williams, *Realigning America: McKinley, Bryan, and the Remarkable Election of 1896*, 33.

<sup>49</sup> Williams, *Realigning America: McKinley, Bryan, and the Remarkable Election of 1896*, 34.

<sup>50</sup> Richard Lingeman, “The Man with the Silver Tongue,” *The New York Times* (2006), 1.

voter turnout, one of the largest in our nation's history.<sup>51</sup> Dominating both the Electoral College and the popular vote, McKinley secured 271 electoral votes as opposed to Bryan's 176. Similarly, the Republicans gained 7,104,779 popular votes, while the Democrats trailed with 6,502,925.<sup>52</sup> The subsequent map, demonstrative of the aforementioned red versus blue state phenomena,



depicts McKinley's victories as red states and Bryan's as blue. The electoral map also demonstrates the geographical partisan division: the North remains Republican and the South proves Democrat. Similar to Lincoln in the Election of 1860, McKinley sweeps both Northern and far Western states, winning critical electoral votes. Although he did not win the Presidency, Bryan's efforts in the Midwest secured him most of the nation's interior, appealing to the farmers his interests explicitly spoke to. He appealed especially to the rural areas of the Rocky Mountains and the Deep South. Utah, having become a state during the election, was secured by Bryan for their extensive population of farmers and other blue collar workers. Also, in accordance with

<sup>51</sup> Williams, *Realigning America: McKinley, Bryan, and the Remarkable Election of 1896*, 44.

<sup>52</sup> Williams, *Realigning America: McKinley, Bryan, and the Remarkable Election of 1896*, 45.

Bryan's premonition, McKinley swept Northeastern cities, where the Republicans' anti-silver, anti-inflation rhetoric was endorsed. Bryan also lost the vote of railroad workers for his silver-back currency, fearing that gold-bond railroad cause it to go bankrupt. Similarly, factory workers were not enthralled by Bryan's economic policies, claiming that they, along with farmers and miners, would have to endure a spike in the cost of living resulting from increased inflation. The city versus rural electoral division conceived from the election consequently costed Bryan the Presidency. In one of his many controversial speeches, Bryan exclaimed, "burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again; but destroy our farms, and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country."<sup>53</sup> His juxtaposition of farms and cities in Bryan's platform essentially averted the urban electorate to McKinley, ultimately giving him 59% of the vote in major cities.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, William Jennings Bryan's loss marked the last time a campaign aimed solely to earn the rural electorate.

As previously stated, the Election of 1896 has become regarded as a political realignment for both its notable precedents and transformation of the Democratic Party. Although Bryan did not win the Election of 1896, he remained largely prominent within his party until the mid-1920s, eliminating the Bourbon faction of the coalition led by former President Cleveland. Bryan's ideologies regarding the election of Senators and recall held ground in the government, although his free-silver policies diminished. His Democratic tenure sparked the transformation of the party's historical Jacksonian values of limited government, to the more modern, liberal position the emanated today. Conversely, McKinley's campaign and Presidency drew an unprecedented focus to a previously overlooked faction of the electorate: skilled workers in both the border and

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<sup>53</sup> Williams, *Realigning America: McKinley, Bryan, and the Remarkable Election of 1896*, 46.

<sup>54</sup> Williams, *Realigning America: McKinley, Bryan, and the Remarkable Election of 1896*, 46.

Midwestern states. Subsequent Republican nominees, having gained the support from the urban populace, entered elections with security over major cities, resulting from the virtually unanimous success of McKinley. The Republican Party dominated the Fourth Party System and remained in power for 28 of the next 36 years, with the next partisan shift occurring decades later in 1932. The realignment of 1896 consequently evolved the Democratic Party to its modern state, while setting precedent for Republicans in major cities.



## VII. The New Deal Coalition Academic Festival, Event 21 [2017]

The realigning Election of 1932 came about during the most ruinous financial crisis in our nation's history: The Great Depression. Incumbent President Herbert Hoover became the last of the Republican dynasty following fruitless economic policies that plunged the nation further into crisis, and extractive social positions that overlooked the prejudicial affairs of the time. Although his predecessor is largely to blame for the Depression, Hoover failed to properly address the broadening extent of the financial crisis. In maintaining his fiscally conservative values, the President argued direct involvement in economic relief efforts were detrimental to capitalism, claiming, "prosperity cannot be restored by raids upon the public Treasury."<sup>55</sup> Instead, he signed high protective tariffs into legislation, and refused to give Federal funds to those that fell impoverished as a result of the Depression. Industries across the nation were failing, and the unemployment rate rose to an unprecedented 24%.<sup>56</sup> Hoover, although having dismal approval ratings, ran for reelection against Democrat and New York Governor, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Roosevelt used Hoover's failing policies as leverage in gaining national support, promising the American people that "happy days are here again."<sup>57</sup> He promulgated the transformation of a lapsed economy and centralized government through a "New Deal" that would eliminate the stagnation of the Great Depression. The election of FDR has been recognized as a realignment because of his comprehensive sweep of the electorate, realigning Republicans and their previously secured electorate to the Democrats, subsequently ending the political power they held for decades. Additionally, Roosevelt is accredited with aligning the African-American, Catholic, and Jewish vote to the Democratic Party, an electorate that previously appealed to the inclusive nature of the

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<sup>55</sup> Donald A. Ritchie, *Electing FDR: The New Deal Campaign of 1932* (University of Kansas Press, 2007), 30.

<sup>56</sup> Ritchie, *Electing FDR: The New Deal Campaign of 1932*, 31.

<sup>57</sup> Ritchie, *Electing FDR: The New Deal Campaign of 1932*, 33.

GOP. The realignment of 1932 put the calamitous economic circumstances to the forefront, but subsequently shaped electorate for another multi-decade Democratic dynasty.

As previously stated, Roosevelt's platform was founded upon the ineffectiveness of Hoover's policies. FDR blamed Hoover's lack of reform during such dire economic circumstances, claiming he facilitated the duration of the Great Depression. Throughout his campaign, FDR maintained optimistic attitudes, enthralling Americans that were suffering because of the crisis. Although never enumerating specific provisions of his New Deal that would transform America, FDR often referenced the increase of aid for struggling farmers, a balanced budget, regulations on big business, and the establishment of electric power as part of the public sector.<sup>58</sup> First, Roosevelt called for a comprehensive evaluation of American banks, calling for the revival of those that went solvent and preserving those on the brink of collapse. He promised to send immediate aid to those the Depression left jobless and starving, and promoted the resurrection of agricultural economies. FDR also committed to appealing Prohibition, maintaining that the liquor industry would create jobs and reduce the elevated levels of crime its implementation had induced. Roosevelt focused predominantly on economic resuscitation in his first campaign, leaving social issues behind.

The Hoover Administration, although receiving a copious amount of disapproval from both his party and the nation, ran for reelection in opposition to Roosevelt. The incumbent President hoped to improve the economic welfare of the nation prior to the forthcoming election, but all efforts proved fruitless. Hoover planned to establish the Reconstruction Finance Corporation that would provide financial aid to failing banks, railroads, and farmers.<sup>59</sup> The program's success was partial, and Hoover's prospects of reducing unemployment through its implementation was

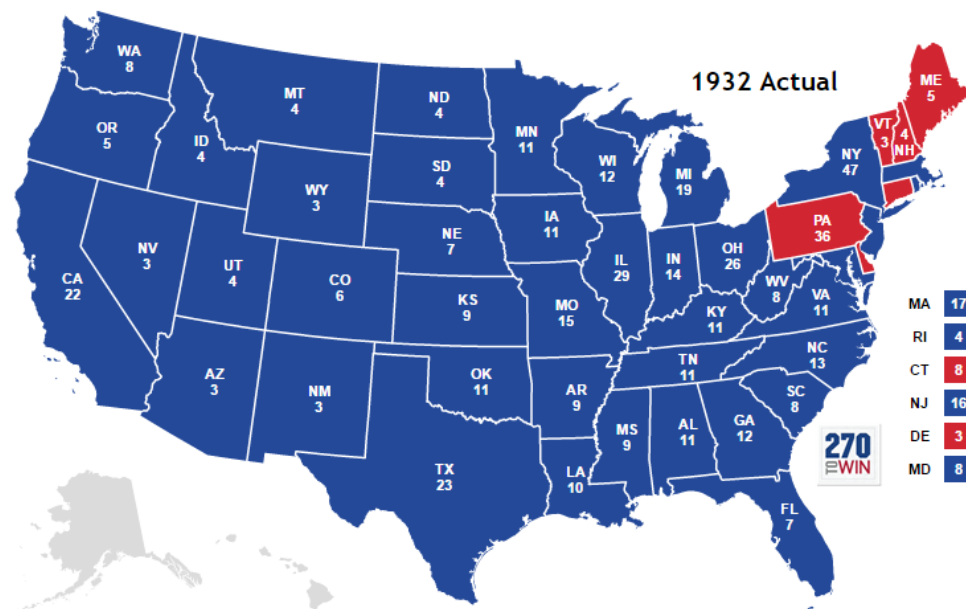
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<sup>58</sup> Ritchie, *Electing FDR: The New Deal Campaign of 1932*, 33.

<sup>59</sup> Ritchie, *Electing FDR: The New Deal Campaign of 1932*, 37.

ineffective. Additionally, Hoover planned to increase taxes among all classes of Americans to avoid taxing solely the wealthy. Congress, however, largely disapproved. President Hoover's aura was often pessimistic, opposite to that of his opponent. The public often deemed his attitude arrogant and unapproachable, although having accomplished little in his tenure. The last nail in Hoover's coffin, essentially, came with the Bonus Army Scandal. The Bonus Army, comprised of unemployed World War I veterans, marched in Washington D.C. protesting the financial hardships inflicted upon them by the Hoover Administration. Both General Douglas MacArthur and Secretary of War Patrick Hurley, ignoring the orders of Hoover, violently retaliated against the veterans. MacArthur and Hurley refused to assume responsibility, placing the blame on President Hoover, and making his reelection impossible.<sup>60</sup>

The result of the election was largely expected, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt became the 32<sup>nd</sup> President of the United States. In the subsequent map, the comprehensive victory of FDR is



<sup>60</sup> <http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/acadfest/2017/all/21>  
Ritchie, *Electing FDR: The New Deal Campaign of 1932*, 42.

demonstrated. Hoover had won six states, securing him only 59 electoral votes and 15,761,841 popular votes. Conversely, Roosevelt swept most of the United States, giving him an unprecedented 472 electoral votes and 22,821,857 popular votes.<sup>61</sup> The geographical partisan divide was eradicated, and the nation unified to combat the woes inflicted by the Great Depression. Although Hoover had lost most of his Republican supporters, the Northern Republicans proved slightly viable in New England. Fearing another Democratic dynasty, Republicans remained loyal to their party although most of America, including members of the GOP, realigned themselves in support of Roosevelt.

The Election of 1932 is undoubtedly a realigning election for the virtually complete transformation of the electorate to the Democratic Party. The GOP merely held their prominence in the once-secured Northern states, and an unprecedented percentage of Republicans voted for Roosevelt. Additionally, the Democratic Party secured the Catholic, Jewish, and African-American electorate, a voting populace that has remained loyal to the party into today. His New Deal that promised reform and his inclusive nature toward immigrants appealed to those of the Catholic faith, especially since most voting Catholics were immigrants themselves. In response to FDR's victory, journalist Joseph Alsop attributed the attraction of Catholics, "on a very wide front and in the truest possible sense, Franklin Delano Roosevelt included the excluded."<sup>62</sup> The Jewish population, although becoming increasingly enthralled by Roosevelt in the latter of his tenure, appreciated the allowance of religious refugees into the United States, as well as the action taken against Adolf Hitler in World War II. African-Americans realigned themselves with the Democratic Party following the dissolution of the party's anti-Black sentiment prior to 1924.

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<sup>61</sup> Ritchie, *Electing FDR: The New Deal Campaign of 1932*, 52.

<sup>62</sup> Kevin Baker, "FDR: A Democracy-Building Eager to Try," *The New York Times* (1995), 1.

Similar to the Catholics, African-Americans believed FDR's inclusive policies would grow to encompass civil rights, ultimately giving them the privileges they had been awaiting since the abolishment of slavery. Ultimately, in Roosevelt's reelection in 1936, he gained 71% of the Black vote, indefinitely aligning African-Americans with the Democratic Party.<sup>63</sup> Finally, both the New Deal and Roosevelt's other controversial policies, have been used as precedent in the implementation of recent legislation. Policymakers have used FDR's policies in debating current issues, such as the establishment of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Acts, as well as the reformation of Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security Programs.<sup>64</sup> Conclusively, the realignment of 1932 has shaped modern American politics, and subsequently placed the Democrats in power for three decades.

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<sup>63</sup> Kevin Baker, "FDR: A Democracy-Builder Eager to Try," *The New York Times* (1995), 1.

<sup>64</sup> John Hendrickson, "Herbert Hoover and the Transformational Election of 1932," *The Public Interest Research Institute* (2013), 22.  
<http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/acadfest/2017/all/21>

## VIII. The Republican Resurgence

The culmination of the New Deal Coalition, upon maintaining its power for 36 years, came with the Democratic Presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson, and the subsequent election of Richard M. Nixon. Johnson assumed office following the tragic assassination of John F. Kennedy, and assured the American people that we would continue JFK's progressive policies. LBJ vowed to forge a war on poverty, as well as to eradicate illiteracy, discrimination, and unemployment.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, he promised to create a "Great Society" for Americans by introducing the Medicare and Medicaid programs into legislation. LBJ vastly combatted segregation through the implementation of both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, promoting the rights of all member of society, no matter their race. The "Great Society," however, was threatened by hippie culture, the revival of Leftist ideologies, and the evolution of the Black Power movement that ravaged American cities with crime and riots.<sup>66</sup> Johnson remained largely popular in both his party and among the American people until the onset of the Vietnamese conflict. He maintained that it was the duty of the United States to impede the proliferation of Communism around the world, thus deploying American troops to the Vietnam region. Anti-war feelings were rampant across the country, and Johnson's approval ratings began to plummet. As a result, LBJ chose not to run for reelection in 1968, ultimately leading the Democratic Party to nominate incumbent Vice-President Hubert Humphrey. The Republicans subsequently nominated Richard Nixon, the former Vice-President under Dwight D. Eisenhower. In addition to the two-party candidates arose a third party, the American Independents, led by pro-segregationist, George Wallace. The Election of 1968 became noted as a realigning election for facilitating the

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<sup>65</sup> John Kyle Day, *The Southern Manifesto: Massive Resistance and the Fight to Preserve Segregation* (The University of Arkansas Press, 2014), 56.

<sup>66</sup> Day, *The Southern Manifesto: Massive Resistance and the Fight to Preserve Segregation*, 60.

culmination of the New Deal Coalition, as well as the preserving Walter Dean Burnham's 30-year realignment cycle.

Richard Nixon's platform in 1968 embodied classic conservative values. His campaign aimed to reach the "silent majority," comprised of middle-class, working Americans.<sup>67</sup> Nixon promised to restore law and order to crime-ravaged cities following both anti-war, anti-segregation protests. Additionally, he aimed to end the conflict in Vietnam on peaceful and amicable means, with prospects of removing American troops from the region. Similarly, Nixon promulgated the enactment of policies that would bring the United States on substantial terms with Russia following virtually a decade of tenuous relations. The Republicans and Nixon campaigned furiously in key battleground states, such as New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Texas, and California. Nixon organized a fleet of advertisements to be shown on television, as well as town halls to further discuss his platform. Additionally, in an effort to gain support from the African American community, Nixon recruited Massachusetts Senator Edward Brooke to accompany him on campaign stops to urban areas.<sup>68</sup>

Often coined as America's forgotten liberal, Democrat Hubert Humphrey put both the Vietnam War and civil rights issues at the forefront of his campaign. At the Democratic National Convention of 1968, Humphrey addressed his party regarding the proliferation of civil rights by claiming, "I say this: the time has arrived in America for the Democratic Party to get out of the shadow of states' rights and to walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights."<sup>69</sup> Additionally, Humphrey advocated for nuclear disarmament to resolve the Cold War conflict with

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<sup>67</sup> Walter Lefeber, *The Deadly Bet: LBJ, Vietnam, and the 1968 Election* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 102.

<sup>68</sup> Lefeber, *The Deadly Bet: LBJ, Vietnam, and the 1968 Election*, 105.

<sup>69</sup> Rick Perlstein, "America's Forgotten Liberal," *The New York Times* (2011), 1.

Russia, as well as to alleviate the tensions in Vietnam. Furthermore, he promised that upon his election to the Presidency, he would cease the American bombing of the Southern Vietnamese region, a statement challenged by both his adversaries and his party.

Southern Democrats largely condemned the nomination of Hubert Humphrey. Consequently, the American Independent Party formed, and George Wallace was chosen as their candidate. Wallace was a pro-segregationist, and most of his radical policies were denounced by the Democratic Party. His support remained solely within the Deep South, with some appeal to Midwestern blue collar workers.<sup>70</sup> Wallace's goal, however, was not to win the Presidency, but rather to pilfer electoral votes from both candidates, ultimately leaving the decision in his hands through bargaining power. Moreover, he instructed his supporters to not vote directly for him, but for the candidate that would ensure his power over the decision.

On November 5, 1968, Richard Milhous Nixon became the 37<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, replacing the New Deal coalition with a Republican-dominated government. Nixon won 301 electoral votes and 31,710,470 popular votes. Humphrey and the Democrats trailed with 191 electoral votes and a proximate 30,898,055 popular votes. Despite his efforts, George Wallace gained an indecisive 46 electoral votes with a mere 9,906,473 popular vote.<sup>71</sup> As demonstrated on the map below, the red versus blue state phenomena is represented anew with the blue depicting Humphrey's states, the red indicative of Nixon's victories, and the gold of Wallace. Interestingly, a geographical shift occurred in the electorate: Republicans gained dominance over the South and the West, while the North proved predominantly Democrat except for both New Hampshire and

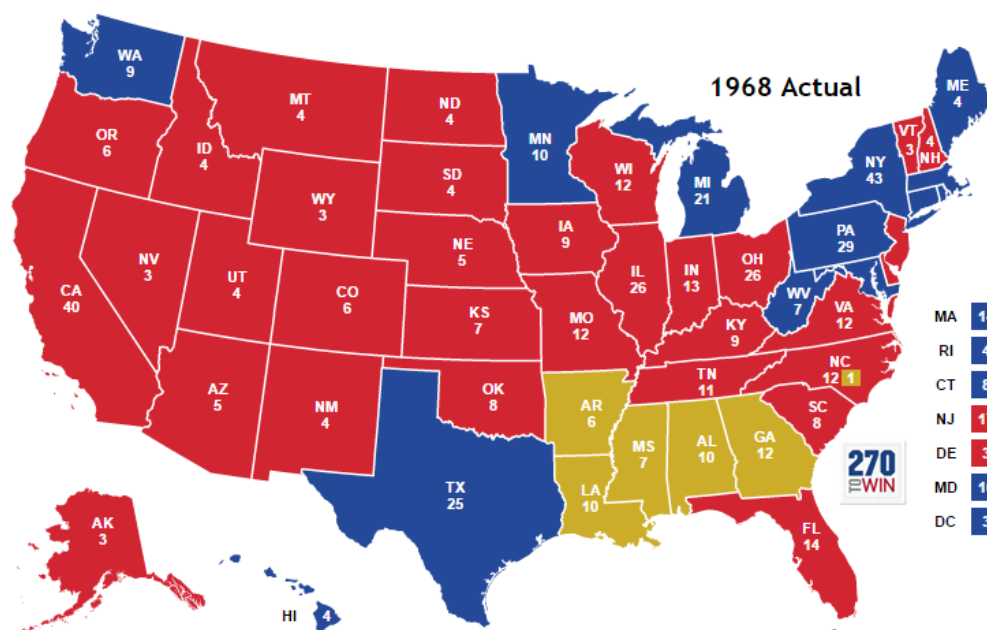
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<sup>70</sup> LeFeber, *The Deadly Bet: LBJ, Vietnam, and the 1968 Election*, 110.

<sup>71</sup> LeFeber, *The Deadly Bet: LBJ, Vietnam, and the 1968 Election*, 122.



Vermont. Although Republicans maintained key Western states until 1932, Nixon swept both the West and the Midwest with the exception of Washington, Minnesota, and Michigan. Wallace,



however, was able to secure only the Deep Southern states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia, with one electoral vote from North Carolina. Nixon dominated among White male and female voters of all ages, as well as by the Protestant and working-class electorate. Conversely, Humphrey prevailed among both the nonWhite and Catholic electorate, gaining in excess of 50% of the Black vote.<sup>72</sup>

The Election of 1968 was noted as a major political realignment predominantly for the geographical shift of the electorate. As previously mentioned, the Southern Democrats had now evolved to become the Southern Republicans, and the Northern Republicans transformed into the Northern Democrats. Hubert Humphrey won roughly 10% of the White Southern vote, with more than two-thirds of his success in the South coming from the African-American electorate.<sup>73</sup> As a

<sup>72</sup> "Election Polls: Vote by Groups, 1968-1972," *Gallup Polls*, 1.

<sup>73</sup> LeFeber, *The Deadly Bet: LBJ, Vietnam, and the 1968 Election*, 198.

result, Democrats could no longer deem the South as a definitive victory for subsequent elections. The election also marked the last time until Bill Clinton's election in 1992 that the states of Maine, Connecticut, and Michigan voted Democrat.<sup>74</sup> Additionally, Republicans gained headway among blue collar workers, an electorate previously dominated by the Democrats. The loss of the election also sparked reform within the Democratic Party. More radical, liberal-minded Democrats began to emerge, mirroring the values of Humphrey. They also began aiming their campaigns on the basis of enhanced representation among the minority vote, as well as both the female and youth electorate.<sup>75</sup> The realignment of 1968 put Republicans in power for another 30-year cycle, with only one interruption from Democrat Jimmy Carter.

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<sup>74</sup> LeFever, *The Deadly Bet: LBJ, Vietnam, and the 1968 Election*, 198.

<sup>75</sup> LeFever, *The Deadly Bet: LBJ, Vietnam, and the 1968 Election*, 200.

## IX. Other Notable Realignments Academic Festival, Event 21 [2017]

Political scientists that are in agreeance with V.O. Key's theory often argue about what political realignments are historically relevant. The partisan shifts previously discussed have demonstrated explicit implications that have shaped the electorate for subsequent years to come, as well as into the modern day. Most of the aforementioned realignments, such as the Age of Jackson and the New Deal Coalition, concur with Walter Dean Burnham's thirty-year cycle, embodying the changes sought by the electorate. More modern elections have demonstrated a sort of partisan shift have been argued by the political science community, claiming they are politically significant, but their magnitude was not as unexpected or extensive.<sup>76</sup>

The Election of 1980, otherwise recognized as the "Reagan Revolution," marked the advancement of the conservative movement, subsequently creating a prevalent partisan ideological rift in the nation.<sup>77</sup> Following the Presidency of Democrat Jimmy Carter, Reagan pushed for tax reform, a reduction of social programs, increased military expenditures, and the negotiation of deal to end the Cold War with the Soviet Union.<sup>78</sup> Reagan won the election by a landslide, mirroring that of FDR in 1932, but with red state domination. The Northern electorate, having previously aligned themselves with the Democratic Party, had realigned themselves to Reagan with the exception of Rhode Island. Demographically, however, Reagan appealed predominantly to White men and women of various age groups. Conversely, Carter maintained his loyalty of both African-American and Hispanic voters.<sup>79</sup> This reason, as well as the placement of Reagan's victory following the sole interruption of the Republican revolution initiated by Richard Nixon's

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<sup>76</sup> Alan Abramowitz and Kyle Saunders, "Ideological Realignment in the U.S. Electorate," *The Journal of Politics* 60 (1998): 638.

<sup>77</sup> Abramowitz and Saunders, "Ideological Realignment in the U.S. Electorate," 636.

<sup>78</sup> Abramowitz and Saunders, "Ideological Realignment in the U.S. Electorate," 636.

<sup>79</sup> Roper Center, "How Groups Voted in 1980," *Cornell University* (1980).

Presidency, have denied the Election of 1980 the title of a major political realignment. Although Reagan took many previously-Democratic states away from the party, many of those states returned to Democratic control in the Election of 1992, following the two-term Presidency of Reagan and the Presidency of George H.W. Bush. Lastly, political scientists argue that both Reagan's election and many of his policies were attributable to Nixon, claiming the realignment of 1968 provided the context for the Republican victory in 1980.

The Election of 1992 and subsequent Presidency of Democrat Bill Clinton ended the Republican Revolution induced by President Nixon. Clinton's platform against the reelection of President H.W. Bush boasted equal rights for members of the LBGT community to serve in the military, an increase of taxes in both the upper and middle classes, a larger role of the Federal government in the healthcare industry, and a ban on abortion counseling in Federally-funded clinics.<sup>80</sup> As a result, the Northern states returned to Democratic loyalty, and the once Republican-dominated Western states had now realigned themselves as blue states. Furthermore, California, a historically Republican state had now come under the control of the Democratic Party. Additionally, since the Election of 1992, the states of Maine, Vermont, Connecticut, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, and Illinois have unceasingly voted Democrat in Presidential elections.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, President Clinton had also won the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Georgia in the new Republican South. The Election of 1992, however, has not been regarded a major political realignment for the end of Democratic reign immediately following his Presidency, as well as the return of Southern states to Republican control. Essentially, the election was merely a realignment of the Western electorate and the reinstatement of the Northeast as Democratic.

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<sup>80</sup> Abramowitz and Saunders, "Ideological Realignment in the U.S. Electorate," 638.

<sup>81</sup> Abramowitz and Saunders, "Ideological Realignment in the U.S. Electorate," 639.

**X. Conclusion***Academic Festival, Event 21 [2017]*

Political realignments have evolved American politics into the modern-day, with each election introducing developing strategies, revolutionary policies, and partisan precedents. In concurrence with V.O. Key's theory of political realignments, the partisan shifts we have explored demonstrate both sudden, unexpected alignments as well as geopolitical shifts of the electorate. Each discussed political realignment came during a time of needed change. The Election of 1860 and the subsequent Presidency of Abraham Lincoln arose from a divided nation in hopes of avoiding the Civil War, while maintaining their respective values regarding slavery. Similarly, the Election of 1932 and the overwhelming sweep of the electorate resulted from the Great Depression, and the promises of Franklin D. Roosevelt to evolve the nation from its dismal economic and social circumstances with his New Deal. Realigning elections have also shaped partisan tendencies geographically throughout the nation. The Southern Democrats of 1860 became the Southern Republicans in the realigning Election of 1968, moving the Democratic electorate out of the South and into the North. Although the urban electorate has now come largely under Democratic control, it gravitated toward the Republican Party following the Election of 1896, and President McKinley's policies favoring big business. The Election of 1896 also marked the last time a party concentrated solely on a region of the nation, learning from the mistake of William Jennings Bryan and his rural-based campaign. Additionally, the aforementioned elections have respectively aligned particular demographics to certain parties. The Election of 1932 and the Presidency of FDR realigned previously-Republican African-Americans to the Democratic Party, as well as securing both the Catholic and Jewish vote into the modern-day. Lastly, political realignments have been attributed to the dissolution of once-prevalent parties, such as the Whigs and the Federalists, introducing the two-party Democratic and Republican system we have today.

Although its significance has been extensively argued within the political science community, political realignments have set enormous precedent in American politics, giving each party and their respective candidate leverage in both particular regions and among certain demographics. In modern elections, parties can use the errors and the successes of the past to potentially induce another realignment, putting their party in power for years to come.

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