

# Go West, Young Liberals! How The Critical Election Of 1992 Pioneered A Win Streak For The Democrats

John Tures<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor of Political Science, LaGrange College

## ABSTRACT

On Election Night, members of the media touted Biden's win in the swing states of Nevada and Arizona. But the seeds of success for the Democrats in the West were sown back in the Critical Election of 1992. Before that year, Democrats only won *any* Western state in four of ten presidential elections, from 1952 through 1988, and a majority of seven states only once during that time frame. But from 1992 to 2020, Democrats dominated the Western region in presidential elections. Our research explains the origins of how the Democratic Party flipped the West, with a series of political, economic and demographic events from 1988 to 1992. In addition, this shift allowed Democrats to prevail in a majority of presidential contests from 1992-2020 (winning nearly 90 percent of popular vote contests in that time frame), after losing 70% of elections from 1952-1988. By placing Kamala Harris on the 2020 ticket, the first Democratic Party candidate for President or Vice-President from the West (west of Texas or the Plains States), Biden recognized the importance of the region for his party's fortunes.

## Critical Election Theory

In 1955, V.O. Key Jr was credited with coining the term "critical elections," cases where a realignment of parties occurred. In these elections, the prior elements of the party system faced massive disruption. "Decisive results of voting reveal a sharp alteration of the pre-existing cleavage within the electorate," Key wrote (1955, 4). "Such events were accompanied by a spike in voting enthusiasm. These critical elections would also set the tone for future contests at the ballot box.

Walter Dean Burnham (1970) supplemented Key's critical elections by noting that such events occurred regularly. "There has long been agreement among historians that the elections of those of 1800, 1828, 1860, 1896 and 1932, for example, were fundamental turning points in the course of American electoral politics (Burnham 1970, 1)."

Burnham (1970) and others (Sundquist 1983) added the notion that specific "new" issues play a role in generating such realignments. Gerald Pomper (1967) also contributed to the study of critical elections by positing the presence of third parties as often playing a role in disrupting the traditional party system, enabling one side to take advantage of the shift in the electorate. He also classified elections as realigning, "maintaining" (continuing the party system role set by the realignment), and "deviating" (a short-term disruption in the dominance of one party set by the last critical election). Furthermore, Lichtman (1976) argued that such changes were more likely to occur based on crises than the candidates. These occur not due to "the personal appeals of particular candidates, but rather from the ramifications of... crises" such as war or a severe economic recession (Lichtman 1976).

## Critics of Critical Elections

Excitement over critical elections from the 1950s began to receive challenges in the early 2000s from Mayhew (2000), who wrote. "The claims of the realignments genre do not hold up well, and the genre's illuminative power has not proven to be great." Noting a less than 100% agreement among critical election scholars about necessary and sufficient conditions for such events, he pounced on the nearly one dozen claims about realignments from various professors.

Others joined Mayhew, either attempting to discredit cases of critical elections (Mayhew 2002) like the election of 1860 (Smith 2015) or claiming the inability of a single election to move a vast and disparate polity like the United States (Carmines and Stimson 1989). Other critics (Hui and Sears 2018) argue that groups are not switching sides, or at least not rapidly over short periods. They contend that either party identification measures remain relatively immutable (Campbell et al. 1960; Lewis-Beck et al. 2008), or people are now leaving parties in a phenomenon known as dealignment (Knuckey 1999) as a means of explaining why no critical election has been identified since 1932.

Pressed to explain the persistent presence of shakeups in party systems and switching of support for parties among groups, Mayhew and critics have taken to admitting that such changes do occur but argue that these are "secular" in nature, occurring for a myriad of reasons, and taking place over long periods. These "rolling" realignments are evolutionary, not revolutionary, they contend. So confident are the critics that they have argued, "Although there have been a handful of dissenters... we view

the current consensus claiming that, since the New Deal, we have experienced what Key called a secular realignment, i.e., a pattern of gradual change," write Brunell, Grofman, and Merrill (2012). Hui and Sears claim, "Realignment, as a long list of studies has confirmed, is rarely caused by a critical election. It is usually an incremental process brought on by a complex mix of political and demographic processes. Our paper reaffirms that general theoretical proposition (2018, 171)." Mayhew (2002, 185) adds, "The ambitious version of the realignments perspective had its fruitful days, but it is too slippery, too apocalyptic, and it has come to too much of a dead end."<sup>1</sup>

## Answering the Critical Election Critics

Criticisms of critical elections, however, must stand up to scrutiny. In their analysis of legislative elections, Brunell, Grofman, and Merrill (2012, 818) state, "Our first test for critical elections involves a search for outliers in the magnitude of inter-election in seat share (for the Congress) and popular vote share for the presidency." However, a party realignment that led to a new system would not be an outlier. One domination would be replaced by another; such a critical election is not a stand-alone or "one-off" by definition. Such events would better explain Pomper's (1967) "deviating" election than a realignment.

Moreover, measures reflecting party identification may be similarly misleading. As Sundquist (1973) points out, party identification is highly resistant to change, even during the Great Depression. "Millions of northern Republicans who, according to the rationale of ideology and class, should have become Democrats did not change parties; they simply deviated in their vote for president. They rejected Hoover and Landon in favor of Roosevelt but continued to support their party in state and local politics, attempting to liberalize it. Moreover, in the South, the reverse of that phenomenon took place. Conservative Democrats remained in their party despite their abhorrence of the New Deal and all it stood for."

A voter is unlikely to head to the local county elections registrar or even the Department of Motor Vehicles and demand a change in registration under party affiliation.<sup>2</sup> He or she will simply vote for his or her party of preference in the subsequent elections, making the same rational judgments. Some may be unaware of their original party registration being on the books. Alternatively, family and local loyalties keep them in a particular party. However, which is more critical: ascertaining why someone claims a party ID early in life and rarely, if ever, changes it, or how that individual actually votes?

For all the focus on dealignment, Sundquist (1983) finds the party system to be relatively stable, without independents dominating the process. Furthermore, Sabato (1988) adds that people care a lot about political parties, even if it is trendy to claim political independence or a lack of interest in elections. Even with sharp realignments, party identity remains a strong predictor of one's vote (Sabato 1988); it does not take huge, double-digit masses of voters to flip regional or national elections. And Stonecash (2011), often listed as a critical elections critic, discovered that party line voting made a comeback in the 1990s, even if such a phenomenon was not as high a level as it was in the 1950s.

## The Political Culture of a Region

Elazar (1984: 109) contends that three overarching factors shape states' political structures, electoral behavior, and modes of organization for political action. They include "*political culture*—the particular pattern of orientation to political action in which each political system is embedded; *sectionalism*—the more or less permanent political ties that link together groups of contiguous states with bonds of shared interests; and the continuing *frontier*—the constant effort of Americans to extend their control over their environment for human benefit and the consequent periodic reorganization of American social and settlement patterns as a result of the impact of that effort."

For Elazar (1984, 110), "[p]olitical culture is particularly important as the historical source of differences in habits, perspectives, and attitudes that influence political life in the various states. Sectionalism is particularly important as a major source of geographically rooted variations that influence state-by-state differences in response to nationwide political, economic, and social developments. The frontier is particularly important as the generator of the forces of change."

Elazar argues that there are three types of political culture: individualistic, traditional, and moralistic. To summarize, "individualistic political culture emphasizes the democratic order as a marketplace" with a utilitarian government to serve peoples' functional needs (Elazar 1984: 114-115). The traditionalistic political culture prefers a hierarchically-oriented society with a paternalistic regime charged with maintaining the status quo and is more ambivalent toward the market (Elazar 1984: 118-119). The moralistic political culture sees government as a positive force where power enables the public good, and partisanship is deemphasized (Elazar 1984: 117-118).

Instead of traditional geographies, Elazar divides up compass directions of America into a new map of political cultures. As a result, there is no unified West but a hodgepodge of individualistic, moralistic, and traditional political cultures. However, it is the same story with other regions, from the Northeast and South to the Midwest, with the various political cultures overlapping within states; in other words, there is no unique New England or Dixie. Thereby, only one state (Tennessee) is

<sup>1</sup>One wonders if the term apocalyptic may have been an accident in its placement, given its meaning as revealing an event.

<sup>2</sup>Those who have written about the costs of voting should also investigate the costs of changing party affiliation.

traditionalistic-dominant, only three (Vermont, Minnesota, and Utah) are moralistic-dominant, and five (Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Indiana, Nevada, and Alaska) are individualistic-dominant (Elazar 1984: 136).

While it is fascinating to contemplate some unexpected similarities between Vermont and Utah despite their radically differing political outcomes, Elazar's work is not without its critiques. Hero and Tolbert (1996, 853) find that "Elazar attributes political processes and outcomes to dominant or predominant cultural values and related normative tenets. Those values, in turn, are said to derive from a state's dominant ethnic and religious groups (these political values and beliefs of racial minorities and non-European groups are not extensively considered in the political-cultural framework)." Both authors find "political culture is itself heavily shaped by state racial/ethnic diversity." Hero and Tolbert contend that political cultures in Elazar's model do not change despite the Hispanic and Asian population increases in the 1960s, as well as African-Americans being tangential at best for the nature and evolution of state political cultures.<sup>3</sup>

Hero and Tolbert's findings show that "Racial/ethnic diversity explains many variations in the grouping of state political cultures. Increased minority diversity (bifurcation) is associated with lower overall education and social policy outcomes. But when the policies are disaggregated by race, we find that policies for minorities are especially poor in homogeneous states. The unique contribution of the diversity interpretation is that it can account for policy variation in the aggregate, as well as with respect to specific policies as they affect minorities (Hero and Tolbert 1996, 851)."

Rather than presume that one explanation is better, it is best to see if there is a unique West with a common historical, economic, demographic, and political experience. Moreover, we would examine whether there would be political ramifications for the region facing so many changes at once that might flip the voters from one party to another, a partisan realignment changing the fortunes of both political parties and America's political outcomes.

## **From 1850 to 1948: The Wild West Follows The Winners**

This section will not provide an exhaustive history of the political culture of the West, only covering the region's role in critical elections. A myth has persisted that the West is always conservative, but this is not the case, as Nugent (2018) points out. Others claim the place has been part of the populist movement (Budger et al. 1981), lumping in the West with the South as part of the William Jennings Bryan faction. But Rogin's (1969) research reveals that California, with its extensive agricultural holdings and budding cities, was not a populist country. And Sarasohn (1980) discusses the role California played in Democratic Party's fortunes in Woodrow Wilson's win in 1916 as challenging that assessment.

Nor was California part of the alleged 1928 critical election that Key claims existed (Shover 1967). Shover claims that the contest was a "backward step" for Democrats, which was replaced by the 1932 election. Sure enough, Democrats did quite well from 1932 through the 1940s. As Ewing (1962) notes, the West followed whoever was the winner and did not serve as the trendsetter.

## **From 1952-1988: Republicans Rule the Rockies & the Region**

Party fortunes changed in the West as the New Deal's influence waned and General Dwight D. Eisenhower began his run of victories. The Democrats won the 1960 election, though not with much Western support. LBJ defeated Goldwater, a son of the Southwest, partially by emphasizing his Texas roots (Young 2019) and winning the region. Nevertheless, such success would resemble one of Pomper's "deviating" elections. That is because Republicans went on to win the region, and by wide margins, through the Nixon and Reagan years, culminating in Bush's continued domination in the 1988 election. The area remained GOP country even in narrow losses in 1960 and 1976.

What enabled the Republicans to win over the region on a widespread basis? Some reasons include the West's focus as a region of Cold War militarization. The Republicans were able to appeal to the reputed "rugged individualism" of the region. Candidates from the GOP railed against the urban decay of the Democrats and championed the rural character of the West (Rankin 2009). The Republican Party also did an excellent job promoting candidates with ties to the region. This included Vice-President and later President Richard Nixon of California, Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, and California Governor Ronald Reagan.<sup>4</sup> Ballantine and Webster (2018) document these cases and the role the West played in producing members of the legislative leadership. Furthermore, on multiple occasions, the Republicans were ahead of the Democrats in locating nominating convention sites in the West, like San Francisco.

Much attention has also been given to anti-government sentiment (Nugent 2018), the so-called "Sagebrush Rebellion," Randy Weaver, the Aryan Nation, the Unabomber, and the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building by those living in the West.

<sup>3</sup>To be fair to Elazar, the first edition of his book *American Federalism* came out in 1966, when the ink was barely dry on the Voting Rights Act, and the Civil Rights Act had only been passed two years earlier, which fundamentally changed the ability of African Americans to participate in the political and economic processes in America. Moreover, his first edition predated extensive migration from Latin America and Asia into the USA and the West.

<sup>4</sup>Though Texas has some Southwest characteristics, while would bring in George H. W. Bush and even LBJ, the Census Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Energy Information Agency, and others have placed Texas in the South, perhaps a combination of geography, history, and the locus of demography in the Eastern portion of the state.

However, for those Westerners who were not in the ranks of the extremists, Rankin (2009) also demonstrates how the West responded warmly to campaign lines like Reagan’s “government is the problem, not the solution” types of quips. That “rugged individualism” of the region fit with the Republican agenda (Young 2019), or appeared to, at least. As a result, it was possible to refer to the GOP as having an “Electoral College lock” over the prior six elections (1968-1988), winning 21 states with 171 Electoral College votes in each contest and another 17 states with 217 Electoral College votes in a majority of those six contests (Pomper 1993, 134), making it nearly impossible for a Democratic Party nominee to prevail nationwide.

For those who study critical elections, it is essential to recognize that while dramatic elections may demonstrate a shocking realignment, there may be secular trends that contribute over time to combine with rapid shifts to produce such change. These include the “Second Great Migration” of African-Americans moving to the Pacific Coast during and after World War II and changes in immigration policies beginning in 1965 (Nugent 2018). But secular demographic trends are not the same as secular electoral realignments.

There were also the contradictions of the GOP pushing a pro-military, anti-government series of slogans or appealing to the Libertarian character of the West’s population, along with a rigid social conservative platform and anti-drug policy that demanded full conformity. There was also the decidedly anti-regulation agenda in its application to nature, which did not work so well for those who thrived in the tourist trade, hunting, and recreational sports, which required eco-friendly sites (Ballantine and Webster 2018). Therefore, the electoral change may be sudden, mainly owing to recent events. However, some rolling variations can contribute to sudden electoral alterations when mixed with shocking shifts over a short period. Certain changes must explain why the shift occurred in 1992, as opposed to 1984, 1988, 1996, or 2000.

### The Critical Events Of 1992

In his post-mortem of the Republicans in 1992, Walter Dean Burnham discussed President George H. W. Bush’s landslide rejection and the vote of no confidence in Reaganomics. “This fact makes the 1992 election of far more than usual confidence,” he wrote. “Rejections of this order of magnitude have not happened very often over the course of American political history (Burnham 1992, 2).”

What caused the Republican dominance of the national presidential elections in general and regional president contests at the state level, in particular, to evaporate almost overnight? All or some of the following events may have had external influences, but the confluence of so many occurring in a short period held enormous consequences for the GOP in the region and nationally due to those shifts. These quick regional shocks came from the termination of the Cold War, the Economic Recession of 1990-1992, the increasing diversity of the region, the L.A. Riots, the Ross Perot phenomenon, the RNC’s disastrous conservative convention, and the ascendancy of Bill Clinton, all occurring during the 1992 campaign season.

### Post-Cold War Consequences

With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of the Soviet Union two years later, America’s long, expensive arms race with the USSR came to an end. What also came to an end were all of those Defense-related jobs, especially high-paying positions in the highly technical industries. As Nugent (2018) reveals, over 800,000 total jobs were lost, including 60,000 in the aerospace field. These were skilled craft workers, scientists, and engineers (Nugent 2018). And when all of those positions were swept away, so too were all of the businesses which relied upon their income too, from the banking industry to the service sector.

In addition to the loss of defense-related jobs in the West, the United States underwent several rounds of closing military bases. We analyzed four rounds of closures from the Base Realignment and Closures (BRAC) Commission: 1988, 1991, 1993, and 1995. We compared how many closures occurred in the 13 Western states and the 38 Non-Western states plus the District of Columbia and divided the closures by averages per state. We also compared the cases designated as “major” cases versus those that were judged to be “minor” by the BRAC Commission (Congressional Research Service 2019).

**Table 1.** BRAC Cuts By Region, By Round & Size Of Base: 1988 and 1991

<i>Region/BRAC</i>	<i>1988 BRAC Major</i>	<i>1988 BRAC Total</i>	<i>1991 BRAC Major</i>	<i>1991 BRAC Total</i>
West Total	7	12	9	11
West Avg (Per State)	0.538	0.923	0.692	0.846
Non-West Total	9	24	15	16
Non-West Avg. (Per State)	0.237	0.631	0.395	0.421

**Table 2.** BRAC Cuts By Region, By Round & Size Of Base: 1993 and 1995, and Total

<i>Region/BRAC</i>	<i>1993 BRAC Major</i>	<i>1993 BRAC Total</i>	<i>1995 BRAC Major</i>	<i>1995 BRAC Total</i>	<i>1988-95 BRAC Major</i>	<i>1988-95 BRAC Total</i>
West Total	9	12	6	13	31	48
West Avg (Per State)	0.692	0.923	0.462	1	2.385	3.692
Non-West Total	17	43	14	37	55	120
Non-West Avg. (Per State)	0.447	1.131	0.368	0.973	1.447	3.158

As the data reveal in Table 1, the West did suffer a disproportionate number of hits from the base closures compared to the rest of the country. The average major base closures from both 1988 and 1991 rounds showed the West averaged twice as many losses as the other states and for the 1991 total base closures. For BRAC 1988, the number of total base closures was still nearly 1.5 times greater in Western states than those other 38 states and DC. Though Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush were not personally micromanaging the base closure process, the ax fell during their presidencies.

When it comes to the remaining two rounds, when Bill Clinton was the U.S. President (see Table 2), the cuts did not hit the West with the same level of intensity. Though the major base closures were more in the West on average in 1993, the total base closure average was greater in non-Western states. It was the same case in 1995, where the cuts were not as disproportionately harsh upon the 13 Western states as those from other regions. This is perhaps one reason why the Democrats were able to consolidate their hold on the region, which began with the 1992 election.

This drawdown in government funding from the late 1980s through 1991 coincided with the small government rhetoric of the Reagan-Bush years. That "government is the problem" quip came back to haunt those professionals who saw the lack of a government paycheck as the real problem those days at the beginning of the 1990s. It exposed the contraction of the Republican economic message of being pro-military and anti-government (Ballantine and Webster 2018). And the economic woes of the West were only just beginning.

### Economic Recession

The economic recession of the early 1990s does not rank among the most severe to strike the United States in comparison to the Great Recession or even the cases from the early 1980s. But the economic downturn during the latter half of Bush's first term hit the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts especially hard (Dzialo et al. 1993; Nardone et al. 1993).<sup>5</sup>

"During 1993, unemployment rates in all the census regions showed some improvement, but the rates remained relatively high in the Northeast and the West. At the end of the recession, the jobless rates for the four regions were relatively close—ranging from 6.5 percent in the West to 7.1 percent in the Northeast. Since then, the rates have diverged substantially. By the fourth quarter of 1993, unemployment rates varied from a low of 5.8 percent in the Midwest to a high of 7.5 percent in the West. Of all the States in the West, California had the highest unemployment rate during the past year—an average of about 9.0 percent—reflecting in part large cutbacks in defense-related activities (Gardner et al. 1994)." From 1991 through 1993, the West's unemployment rate exceeded the national average (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Unemployment In The Early 1990s Recession, By Region

<i>Region/Unemployment</i>	<i>1990 IV</i>	<i>1991 IV</i>	<i>1992 IV</i>	<i>1993 IV</i>
USA	6	7	7.3	6.5
Northeast	6	7.6	8.1	6.9
South	6.3	6.8	6.9	6.2
Midwest	5.8	6.6	6.1	5.8
West	6	7.1	8.5	7.5

Source: Gardner et al. 1994.

And though the recession technically ended in 1991, the economic pain persisted up until the 1992 election itself. "Unemployment continued to worsen long after the NBER-designated endpoint of the 1990-91 contraction," writes Gardner (1994). "The increase in the number of unemployment continued for 15 months past the official ending date, and between July 1990 and June 1992, totaled 46 percent."

This recession also occurred just as George H. W. Bush broke a key promise, one that angered Western voters. "President Bush's decision to raise taxes to contend with the Federal deficit despite asking voters to read his lips to the contrary did not play well in many Western states (Rankin 2009)."

Not only did the recession have a particular regional component, but a racial one as well. Evidence from Gardner (1994: 8) showed that African-Americans, Hispanics, and younger people were disproportionately affected by the unemployment from the recession. Nardone et al. (1993) add that blacks lagged behind whites in median earnings during the downturn. These would help serve as the underlying cause for a devastating trigger event just a few months later.

### L.A. Riots

At the end of April of 1992, the GOP's woes continued with the Los Angeles Court acquittal of the officers charged with beating motorist Rodney King (on March 3, 1991), despite being captured on video. This triggered several days of rioting,

<sup>5</sup>Southern California, like New England, was also particularly hard hit by the collapse of the commercial housing industry, the bank failures from these, and depressed real estate values, which would not recover until the middle of the decade (Burton, 1998).

which led to more than 60 deaths, thousands of injuries, and millions of dollars of damage.

Of course, race riots are hardly unique events. Several cities across America had them in the 1980s and 1990s. But is the riot in Los Angeles significantly worse than others? We look at the ten most prominent race riots of the 1980s and 1990s, comparing them in terms of deaths, injuries, and arrests.

**Table 4.** Comparing The L.A. Riot To Other Major Race Riots Of The 1980s and 1990s

<i>Ten Most Extensive Race Riots Of The 1980s and 1990s</i>	<i>Deaths</i>	<i>Injuries</i>	<i>Arrests</i>
1980 Miami Riots	18	350	855
1984 Lawrence, Massachusetts Riot	0	17	50
1985 MOVE Bombing in Philadelphia	11	4	1
1989 Miami Riot	2	10	250
1990 Wynwood (Mercado) Riot	0	0	
1991 Crown Heights Riot	2	190	129
1991 Overtown Miami Riots	0	3	20
1991 Washington D.C. Riot	0	50	230
1992 L.A. Riot	63	2383	12111
1996 St. Petersburg Riot	1	11	20

What these results from Table 4 show are that the Los Angeles Riot had nearly twice as many deaths as all of the other nine major race riots of the 1980s and 1990s combined. The L.A. Riot had 3.75 times more injuries than the other nine cases of race riots in the two decades and more than seven times as many arrests as the other nine riots over racial issues in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>6</sup>

President George Bush angered African-Americans with his characterization of the events. Instead of seeking to understand the motives behind the frustration, he focused on "the brutality of a mob, plain and simple (Hunt 2012)," treating the event as crude criminality instead of a response to years of structural inequality and police brutality.

Hunt (2012) documents how the response to the King verdict was more than just about that case alone. It was to "the process of deindustrialization in South Central Los Angeles, which was accompanied by a devastating loss of quality jobs in the region. The gap between the haves and have-nots widened considerably in Los Angeles as the ranks of the working poor (e.g., Latino immigrants) and non-working poor (e.g., blacks) grew. This precarious situation was inflamed further by decreases in federal support for housing, education, and inner-city community building during the neoconservative Reagan and Bush presidencies (Hunt 2012, Xiii)."

The Los Angeles Riot would not only expose concerns about law enforcement but would also trigger an angry response from conservatives, which would be exposed later that year at the Republican National Convention in Houston.

**Diversity: The 1990s**

The last time L.A. experienced such a devastating riot, back in 1965 in the Watts neighborhood, California Governor Pat Brown enlisted ex-CIA Director John McCone to investigate. The McCone report, more than 100 pages in length, labeled "Violence in the City: An End or A Beginning?" identified several causal agents: police hostility, poor socioeconomic conditions, as well as minimal job opportunities, and access to quality health care and education.

Nearly 25 years later, the *L.A. Times* published the review "25 Years After the Watts Riots: McCone Commission's Recommendations Have Gone Unheeded." That article, by Darrell Dawsey, was published nearly two years before the riots in response to the Rodney King verdict (1990). In other words, the original Watts riot and its report mirrored its 1990s case. Would California and the whole Western region be more diverse than it was decades earlier?<sup>7</sup>

To determine if this is the case, we analyze the Diversity Index from the Census Bureau from the U.S. Census Bureau, as measured by the National Equity Atlas ([https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Diversity\\_index#/?breakdown=1&geo=02000000000054000](https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Diversity_index#/?breakdown=1&geo=02000000000054000)).

<sup>6</sup>Data are not available for damages for all cases, but the combination of four other cases of property damages from race riots does not come within a tenth of all damages to the city of Los Angeles.

<sup>7</sup>The combination of the Cold War Defense Department drawdown, coupled with the disastrous Pacific Coast recession, triggered a wave of out-migration from the State of California (Nugent 2018) and similarly affected regions. Many of these were white and formerly affluent, leaving for other regions, never to return. Others chose to move to other areas within the West (Nugent 2018).

Attached are the comparisons of Western states to non-Western states from the 1980s through 2019. In addition, we also look at whether the difference between the two averages is statistically significant or not.

Table 5:

**Table 5.** Diversity Index By Region And By Census

<i>Diversity Index</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2019</i>
Mean: Western States	0.6092	0.6792	0.8638	0.9477	0.9992
Mean: Non-Western States	0.4874	0.4764	0.7105	0.8253	0.8924
T-Ratio	1.55	2.22	1.77	1.44	1.29
Statistical Significance	P<.10	P<.05	P<.05	P<.10	P>.10

As Table 5 shows, Western states were already more diverse than their non-Western counterparts before 1990, but not significantly so. That changed in the 1990 analysis, where the gap between the two groups was statistically significant at the .05 level. That significant difference of means between Western states and other states persisted in 2000 until non-Western states came closer in diversity to the West in 2010, and just before 2020, the differences were not significant enough even at the .10 level. This increases the confidence in our theory that the early 1990s reflected a significant change, a gap in diversity in the West much greater than that of other states in the USA.

**Ross Perot**

Viewing the weaknesses of the Bush Administration and Bill Clinton’s many scandals, Texas businessman H. Ross Perot sensed an opportunity. Through talk shows and with his sizeable bank account, Perot parlayed both into an independent candidacy that put him within striking distance of both party nominees in the popular vote in May, leading into June. In fact, Perot’s decision to jump into the 1992 presidential contest had the greatest impact on the West, more than any other region.

As noted earlier, the West is known for its independent streak (Young 2019). But such independence in action had previously not shown up as significant in prior academic studies. Vandello and Cohen (1999) developed a measure of individualism vs. collectivism, examining an eight-variable index and applying them to states. But our five-point scale (most individualistic = five points to most collectivist = 1 point) revealed that the West was not more likely to be individualistic than other regions (2.615 scores vs. 3.12 for non-Western).

Similarly, to test for political independence, we looked at how voters declared themselves on exit polls. Did they claim to be a Democrat, Republican, or Independent on CNN’s Exit Polls (1998) in 1992? Our research found that 25.84% of Westerners claimed to be Independent, no different from the 25.92% of non-Westerners who professed political independence.

Not all states provided their voter registration by party identification with an option for independence or non-affiliation. Of the 29 states that provided such data (eight Western states, 21 non-Western states), we found that non-Western states reported 24.92% registered as an independent or political party other than a Republican or Democrat, compared to 23.79% for Western states.

According to the Pew Research Center (2019), "Independents often are portrayed as political free agents with the potential to alleviate the nation’s rigid partisan divisions. Yet the reality is that most independents are not all that "independent" politically." The Pew Research Center finds that 38% of Americans call themselves independent, compared to 31% of Democrats and 26% of Republicans. At the same time, more than 80% of those declaring themselves to be independent clearly lean toward a particular party (Pew Research Center, 2019).

But when it came to making a political choice of an independent candidate, it was a different matter. In Western states, Perot received 23.59% of the vote on average in the 1992 election, compared to 18.1% of the vote in non-Western states. The results of the difference in means are statistically significant as well.

**Table 6.** Political Independence and Perot Vote: The Western States vs. Non-Western States

<i>Diversity Index</i>	<i>Independent: Voter Registration</i>	<i>Independent: Voter ID On Exit Polls</i>	<i>Perot Vote 1992</i>
Mean: Western States	0.2379	0.2584	0.2359
Mean: Non-Western States	0.2492	0.2592	0.181
T-Ratio	0.15	0.54	3.2
Statistical Significance	P>.10	P>.10	P>.001

Such independent candidates are seen as having an important role in critical elections (Pomper 1967), appealing to new voters (Schofield et al. 2003), and wrenching voters away from their traditional parties and positions. And Perot’s independent-minded positions did just that in the West (Rankin 2009), though his strong emphasis on deficit-cutting perhaps seemed too close to the GOP for a region suffering from their own Defense Department drawdowns.

**Bill Clinton’s Balancing Act**

As the campaign devolved into charges and counter-charges between Perot and Bush, Clinton was freed up to display his considerable talents for bringing people together to find common ground. He found ways to link Reagan Democrats together with African-Americans, looking for positive solutions to the riots while distancing himself from more extreme elements by condemning Sister Souljah for calling blacks to take a week off of killing each other to go after white people (Baker 1993).

Such outreach to both groups appeared authentic. McWilliams (1993) reported that with Ron Brown as leader of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), African-Americans were insiders, not outsiders, who asked for votes and little else. He quoted William Julius Wilson, who said Clinton spoke: "to those who had grown weary of destructive racial rhetoric" and added, "this year, that disposition counted (McWilliams 1993).

Pomper (1993) also revealed data showing that Clinton was more than just a lucky beneficiary of a Bush-Perot spat. He won over more Bush voters in 1988 than Perot took from Bush and also swiped more Bush voters than Perot and Bush took from Democrats in 1992, more than twice as many combined (see Table 7). He also wooed about twice as many new voters than Bush and Perot combined (Pomper 1993).

**Table 7.** Shifting Voters Preferences In The 1992 Election

Pomper The Election of 1992 (1993)		
Clinton	Loyalists (Had Voted With Dukakis In 1988)	23.50%
Clinton	Converts (From Bush In 1988)	12.20%
Clinton	Recruits (New Voters)	8.00%
Bush	Loyalists (Had Voted With Bush In 1988)	32.00%
Bush	Converts (From Dukakis In 1988)	1.50%
Bush	Recruits (New Voters)	3.80%
Perot	Converts From Dukakis In 1988)	3.40%
Perot	Converts (From Bush In 1988)	11.30%
Perot	Recruits (New Voters)	4.20%

**The Houston RNC Convention Hyper-Conservatism**

While Perot dropped out due to sagging poll numbers and questions about his use of private investigators against political opponents, Clinton’s surge gave the Democrats the lead nationwide. Bush needed to make up for lost ground, but the Republican National Convention in Houston produced the opposite effect.

Academic and journalistic sources agree that the GOP Convention pulled the Republicans well outside of the mainstream. "The Republican convention in Houston was a turning point in the campaign," writes *Congressional Quarterly* (2002, 84). "Strategists decided to shore up Bush’s right-wing support. . . . The party’s platform committee was dominated by the right-wing Christian Coalition. Speeches by Patrick Buchanan, Pat Robertson, and Marilyn Quayle, questioning the Democrats’ patriotism and arguing for a rollback of civil liberties, played badly." It was the most conservative convention since the GOP in San Francisco in 1964 (White 1967), coincidentally the last time the Democrats won the West. This is more than just a matter of punditry. The far-right message provided no more than a statistically insignificant 3-point uptick in surveys in comparison to the Democrat’s post-convention 20-point bounce in the polls after their New York City convention (*Congressional Quarterly* 2002, 84).

Abramson et al. (1994, 43) agree. "Contrary to expectations, Bush received no significant postconvention bounce in the polls," the authors write. "Whatever the full set of reasons, one part of the explanation was that the Republican convention was not as well managed as most had been in the past. . . . [T]he Christian Coalition, an organization that was a vestige of Pat Robertson’s 1988 presidential campaign, had a greater than expected influence in drafting the Republican platform, and the final document was even more conservative on social issues than the 1988 Republican platform had been. . . the most conservative forces in the party got extensive prime time coverage."

The authors continue, "It appeared to many viewers that the Republican party included too many extremist elements among its leadership. . . .The Republican platform, as we have noted, was very conservative: it continued the party’s stringent

opposition to abortion (debate over that issue was prohibited at the convention), it opposed various measures advocated by gays and lesbians, and it denounced government support for art deemed obscene or offensive (Abramson et al. 1994, 43-44)."

The authors went on to show how the RNC Convention pulled the party well away from political moderation, ceding the center to the Democratic Party. "Pat Robertson delivered a speech that was harsh and strident. . . . Not only did this sequence of speeches and positions suggest that the Republican Party might be far to the right of the American mainstream, but it also seemed to suggest that Bush had lost control over his party and the convention (Abramson et al. 1994, 44)."

The worst moment for the Republican Party occurred during Pat Buchanan's message, which was given a prime-time slot, ahead of even Ronald Reagan's speech. "Instead of seeking assurances of a conciliatory address by his chief opponent, Bush's campaign had let Buchanan speak as he wanted. 'There is a religious war going on in this country for the soul of America. It is a cultural war as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the Cold War itself, for this is a war for the soul of America. And in the struggle for the soul of America, [Bill] Clinton and [Hillary] Clinton are on the other side, and George Bush is on our side (Abramson et al. 1994, 44).'"

Columnist Molly Ivins (1992) slammed the speech, claiming it probably sounded better in its original German, hinting that it had totalitarian undertones. That's because the message had particular links for the West, as Buchanan concluded his address by cheering the military occupation of Los Angeles in the wake of the riot over the verdict against the police officers accused of beating Rodney King.

Such angry speeches, targeted at liberals and minorities, may have been intended to unite whites around the Republican banner. But such efforts by the GOP Convention speakers backfired as they turned off whites, even in the West. As *The New York Times* Exit Polls on the West reveal, Bush went from winning the white vote in the West by a 58-41% percentage in 1988 to losing whites narrowly to Clinton, 37% to 39% to 24% for Perot.

### **1992 Election Results**

Much has been made of the argument that Perot, who jumped back into the race later in the year, cost Bush the election and handed the contest to an undeserving Clinton. Such claims ignore Clinton's rise in the polls at Perot's expense and that evaporation of such a big lead when the Texas businessman reentered the race in the Fall of 1992. Moreover, Pomper's (1993) evidence shows that Clinton drew more from Bush than Perot did. Clinton also brought in more new voters than Bush and Perot combined. His loss of Dukakis voters to Bush or Perot was much lower than Bush's losses of votes to others. And as Pomper (1993) demonstrates, not only did Clinton improve upon Dukakis in 1988, but nine Western states experienced large shifts in two-party support (1976-88 to 1992), while the remaining four Western states found at least moderate shifts in the two-party vote (1976-88 to 1992).

As Burnham (1993) claimed earlier, such a victory was of such a great magnitude as to be a rare case in U.S. politics was displaced. Bush would join William H. Taft, Herbert Hoover, and Jimmy Carter, as well as John Adams, John Q. Adams, Martin Van Buren, Grover Cleveland, and Benjamin Harrison, on that list of defeated presidential incumbents (Burnham 1993).

### **Post-1992 Western Trends Persist**

The 1992 election would not become an "outlier" in the West but a sharp shift in electoral politics with the capacity to build a durable foundation for the Democrats. The events in the West that launched this trend would not only persist but would be joined by additional factors that would solidify such a realignment.

### **Contradictions Revealed**

Ballantine and Webster (2018) reveal the contradictions within the Republican Party of pushing more national military spending in the region from 1952-1988 while toeing an anti-government line. The decision of the Republican Party to lurch rightward into their opposition to government spending had not only decimated the Defense industry in the West, but the anti-regulatory policies now threatened those who made a living off the West, either in hunting, fishing, tourism, or outdoor recreational sports. Ballantine and Webster (2018) even noted the shift in support for Democrats in Western ski towns. Those who loved and needed the land for their living looked with alarm at the greater powers of mining companies and corporations polluting. Attempts to supplement the energy needs with less impactful and more eco-friendly methods like solar, wind, and geothermal industries were met with disdain by most Republicans but embraced by Democrats.

Additionally, the libertarian character of the region, so praised by Republicans, began to chafe under the new social conservative regime in charge of the GOP, with a series of mandates for behavior conformity based upon extremely narrow interpretations of the Bible, which further alienated the rugged individualists from their Republican roots. It was hard to justify a "hands-off government" that opposed marijuana legalization, even for medicinal purposes, so vehemently. One could not push deregulation in economic affairs and behavioral regulation in one's private life without another contradiction.

## **Diversity Advances The Democratic Party**

While Hunt (2012) pointed out the problems the Reagan-Bush years had upon the African-American community, it was a slightly different story for the Hispanic community. Gone were the days of the Simpson-Mazzoli Bill during the Reagan years, or even the relatively open invite from the Democrats, balanced against the will of labor unions to avoid having wages devalued with a surplus of potential workers. Registration showed a nearly even distribution among the Republican Party, Democratic Party, and independent status. The recession of 1990-1992 may have opened the door for the Democratic Party with Hispanics on economic issues, just as the Houston GOP Convention seemed to display a "Not Welcome" sign from the Republican Party.

Then came a disastrous decision of the Republican Party, in a bid to appeal to whites in the region, which had gone slightly for Clinton over Bush and Perot. It began in Pete Wilson's California, where the GOP Governor sought to ride a series of propositions to electoral victory. One targeted denial of service to illegal aliens in 1994, while another took aim at Affirmative Action two years later. In 1998, Republicans supported another proposition, this one opposing bilingual education in schools. Many of these may have passed, though some were undone by courts. But the effect upon nonwhites, and even whites, were highly damaging.

Nugent (2018) argues that such propositions drove off the Hispanic population. Hui and Sears (2018) produce evidence that shows Hispanics weren't moved to the Democratic Party by these ballot initiatives. But their data begins in 1992 and tests whether such changes occurred thereafter. It fails to show the shift from 1988 to 1992, which means that the propositions did not cause the change in support but merely reinforced it. Korey and Lascher (2006) find a trend toward the Democratic Party that predates the GOP-backed propositions. Specifically, "We assess macropartisanship in the Golden State from 1980 through 2001, drawing on Field Polls of California adults. We find that essentially there have been two eras in recent state history: a period of increasing Republican identification up to 1991 and an era of increasing Democratic identification thereafter (Korey and Lascher 2006)." Furthermore, Segura and Fraga (2008) agree with Nugent (2018) that not only did Latinos grow in the state, but they are also dominating the state in political power through the Democratic Party.

The harsh anti-immigration rhetoric typically targeting the Hispanic population did not go unnoticed by the Asian-American community. Once touted as a "model minority" for the American dream for their values and success, Asian-Americans rewarded the Republican Party with a majority of support in 1992. However, the combination of the GOP anti-immigration mantra, along with attacks on Al Gore for fundraising at a Buddhist Temple, seemed to have a greater issue with the "different" religion than the money brought in. By 2000, Asian-Americans preferred the Democratic Party by the same margins they used to back the GOP and solidified their support for the party over the next several elections, persisting through 2020, as most took a dim view of President Trump's "China Virus" label for COVID-19 and the microaggressions against Asian people from more nationalistic sources.

Anti-affirmative action policies merely reinforced the role of the party in the minds of African-Americans, continuing the trends of the Reagan-Bush years that turned off the black population (Hunt 2012).

Additionally, a number of whites may not have been entirely pleased with the attacks upon nonwhites. Clinton came within a percentage point of repeating his 1992 success with Western white voters in another three-way contest four years later. While George W. Bush may have brought back white voters west of the Mississippi in his two wins, these two elections were by much closer margins than the GOP enjoyed in the region in the 1970s and 1980s, according to *New York Times* exit polls. And Barack Obama narrowly won the white vote in the West in 2008.

## **Rocky Mountain High-Tech**

While some abandoned the West after the devastating recession of the early 1990s, others gravitated to new areas, putting their highly skilled talents to good use. Silicon Valley became replicated across the region, and these areas prefer the Democratic Party. "Democrats had been gaining among higher-income, skilled professionals in rapidly growing and high-tech areas such as Bellevue and Redmond, Washington," wrote Rankin (2009). He cites Judis and Teixeira (2004) and their "Ideapolis" of Seattle, Portland, joining Silicon Valley. They "back regulatory capitalism and reject GOP social conservatism (Rankin 2009, 161)." And the attraction of good talent worldwide just does not seem to work well with the anti-immigration rhetoric or policies of the Republican Party.

And it's not just along the Pacific Coast. Rankin noted the role of Denver and Boulder as areas growing in diversity and greater levels of higher education, now resembling Los Angeles in voting patterns (Rankin 2009, 167). These younger voters in the region are also shifting their preferences. Whereas Reagan won the 18-29-year-old vote with 59% of that estimated tally, Obama took this same youth vote with 66% of the vote.

## **West Coast Democratic Stars**

Republicans continued to try and highlight the importance of the region through convention sites and candidates. They chose San Diego for their 1996 Republican National Committee Convention. Vice-Presidential nominee Jack Kemp (born in L.A., played for Occidental College) enjoyed success with the Los Angeles, then San Diego Chargers before going to Buffalo to play and run for Congress. Arizona Senator John McCain won the 2008 GOP nomination and picked fellow Westerner Sarah Palin,

Alaska's Governor, as his running mate. Republican Party nominee Mitt Romney (2012) had ties to Utah and the Salt Lake City Winter Olympic Games. And actor Arnold Schwarzenegger brought star power to California Republicans as "the Governor" from 2003 to 2011, "the kind of socially moderate Republican who can win elections in California," wrote Rankin, [who could] "save the Republican Party from itself (2009, 174)."

But Democrats were no longer ignoring the region anymore. The Democratic National Committee held its 2000 convention in Los Angeles, and Hawaiian-born Barack Obama accepted the 2008 nomination at Invesco Field in Denver 2008 (Rankin 2009). By then, California Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi had become Speaker of the House, and Nevada Senator Harry Reid was Senate Majority Leader. All of this culminated in Joe Biden's selection of California Senator Kamala Harris as the first Vice-Presidential nominee for the Democrats west of Texas in 2020. Such greater focus on the region forced the GOP to try harder to appeal to the region, to no avail.

### **Recessions Reinforce Anti-Republicanism**

Any in-roads that moderates like Governor Schwarzenegger or Senator McCain, or Presidents like George W. Bush (who sought closer ties with the Hispanic community) may have made were swept away by the Great Recession of 2007-2009, which fell disproportionately not only on California but also cities like Las Vegas, Nevada, and Phoenix, Arizona (Rankin 2009, 165).

The fact that the failures happened under President George W. Bush's watch reinforced the notion that GOP policies just didn't work for the region. The area rewarded Obama with strong majorities. And the infiltration of the coronavirus into the West Coast triggered yet another devastating economic downturn thanks to the President Donald Trump Administration's inept response. Anger over requiring members of the region to wear masks and engage in social distancing did not seem to be outweighed by the shocking death toll, and the refusal of some Republicans to either acknowledge the presence of COVID-19 or adopt the safety measures helped deliver the greatest level of Western support to the Democratic Party since LBJ's sweep in 1964.

### **Conclusions About The Role Of The 1992 Election, In The West And Nationwide**

So far, we have uncovered a myriad of sources that have indicated (a) that the West is more favorable to the Democratic Party than it used to be and (b) that there are a number of good reasons why such a shift has taken place, ranging from the Defense Department drawdown in the region, the economic recession of the early 1990s, diversity in the West, political moderation by the Democrats and ideological extremism by the Republicans, as well as the political manifestation of individualism. We also know that (c) the 1992 election was an important victory for the Democratic Party, and (d) candidates like Bill Clinton, Barack Obama, and Joe Biden have experienced more success than George McGovern, Jimmy Carter, Walter Mondale, and Michael Dukakis, in the region and in national contests.

But even as critical election critics have admitted that party fortunes have changed across regions, they cling to the notion that such alterations, if they do exist, are secular in nature, occurring over a long period of time. We should see the region incrementally creep from the GOP to the Democratic Party over many elections at a more glacial pace. They claim that we should not expect a dramatic realignment in party support at the ballot box in a single election. We will test whether the 1992 election did create a fundamental change not just in regional support in presidential contests in the region, but we will see if such results affect the overall outcome of subsequent presidential elections nationwide.

### **Theory and Hypothesis**

To determine whether or not the arguments in this paper are on the right track, we propose putting forth a theory of critical elections which contends that the presence or absence of critical regional realignments are likely to alter trends in presidential contests for a political party, where the independent variable reflects rapid changes in regional support for a political party, while the change in national party fortunes in presidential elections is the dependent variable.

We examine two hypotheses, which are testable versions of the theory. In the first hypothesis, we test whether there was a significant change in electoral support for the Democratic Party in both Western states won and the percentage of regional Electoral College votes won from the West, which helped deliver the 1992 election to the Democrats (after years of humiliating defeats). Then we look at a second hypothesis that tests whether the critical changes in the 1992 election in Western state victories and the percentage of votes won in the Electoral College from the West persisted through the next several elections, through 2020.

If the hypotheses are supported, we should see a significant spike in Democratic Party fortunes both the West and nationwide in 1992, one where the eight contests of 1992-2020 are significantly different from Democratic Party fortunes in the 10 presidential elections before 1992. This would also indicate the presence of a positive relationship, where an increase in the independent variable produces a corresponding increase in the dependent variable. Should those advocating a more secular explanation be right, we should see little to no significant difference between the two time periods, neither a spike nor a fundamental shift in average electoral performance, both in percentages of popular votes and in Electoral College contests.

**Table 8.** Analytical Method

Theory: The presence or absence of regional critical realignments are likely to alter trends in presidential contests for a political party.	
Independent Variable:	Dependent Variable:
The presence or absence of a significant shift in states won by a party in a narrow time frame, which persists over subsequent elections.	The presence or absence of a regional critical election in a particular year.
Hypothesis 1: The presence of a significant change in Democratic Party support in Western states occurred began during the 1992 election, producing a regional critical election.	
Independent Variable(s):	Dependent Variable:
The percentage of Democratic Party victories in states in the Electoral College (and their Electoral College vote percentages) in the West.	The Presence Or Absence Of A Regional Critical Election In The West In 1992
Hypothesis 2: The presence of a Western critical election in 1992 produced a change in national Democratic Party election results beginning in 1992 and continuing through the 2020 contest	
Independent Variable:	Dependent Variable:
The presence or absence of a critical election in the West in 1992	The Performance Of The Democratic Party In National Presidential Elections, 1992-2020

## Research Design

Ballantine and Webster (2018) list several Western states but strangely exclude California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska, and Hawaii from their list. Nugent (2018) expanded his list to include prairie states like the Dakotas, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas. Several of these resemble the plains states more, while Texas, based on its history, has been historically included among the original Southern states. Ballantine and Webster (2018) also exclude Oklahoma and Texas, as I do.

For the purposes of this research, we identify the West as constituting the following 13 states: Alaska, Hawaii, Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico. The U.S. Census Bureau, Centers for Disease Control, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Energy Information Agency, etc., include these 13 states in the West.

Such a map includes those based on geography and common interests (mining, drilling, and ranching) and less on the farming more common in the Midwestern region. Much of the region can encompass Joel Garreau’s (1981) famous map of the Pacific Coast (Ecotopia), the Southwest (MexAmerica), and the "Empty Quarter" of Rocky Mountain states, leaving the others in the South (Dixie) or nation’s “Breadbasket” in the Midwest, as he appears to do.

As for the temporal domain, we first look at whether the Democratic Party won a state or not, beginning in 1952 and concluding in 2020. We then compare the percentage of Western states won by the Democratic Party in each of the 18 elections (1952-2020) and test the means of each of the two samples: the 1952-1988 U.S. Presidential Elections and the 1992-2020 U.S. Presidential Elections. We look to see if the t-test of these two different time frames is statistically significant.

In addition, we look at what percentage of the Electoral College votes for the 13-state region were won by the Democratic Party. Again, we compare the percentage of Western state Electoral College votes won by the party in the 10 elections before 1992 (1952-1988) and the eight elections from 1992 to 2020. These involve conducting a t-test to see if the difference in the means of the two samples is statistically significant.

Finally, we examine the national presidential contests from 1952-1988 and those from 1992-2020, both for their popular vote differences, as well as their Electoral College results. Given the presence of third parties in contests, we also look at the percentage of votes garnered by both major parties as a percentage of two-party votes to determine if any differences exist.

## Results

### The Western Region From Republican Rule to Democratic Dominance

#### *Popular Vote: Before 1992 and Through 1992*

In the popular vote total for the Western states, Republicans saw their streak of popular vote totals end in 1992, as Democrats went on to run the table in the next several elections.

**Table 9.** The Democratic Party Share Of The Western Vote, All Parties Candidates

<i>West</i>	<i>Political Party/Year</i>	<i>1972</i>	<i>1976</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1984</i>	<i>1988</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2008</i>
	Democratic	40	46	34	38	46	43	48	48	50	57
	Republican	57	51	53	61	52	34	40	46	49	40
	Independent			10			23	8	4		
	T = 2.58 (p<.05)	Mean 1972-1988: 40.8%				Mean 1992-2008: 49.2%					

Though critics are sure to point out that Clinton received a smaller share of votes in 1992 than Dukakis did in 1988, the nature of the two-party system belies Clinton’s strength. When looking at the two-party share of the vote, his totals in 1992 (and in 1996) are 55% of the vote.

**Table 10.** The Democratic Party Share Of The Western Vote: Two Party Only

<i>West</i>	<i>Political Party/Year</i>	<i>1972</i>	<i>1976</i>	<i>1980</i>	<i>1984</i>	<i>1988</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>1996</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2008</i>
	Democratic	40	46	39	38	46	55	55	50	50	57
	Republican	57	51	61	61	52	45	45	48	49	40
	T = 5.14 (p<.001)	Mean 1972-1988: 41.8%				Mean 1992-2008: 53.4%					

Regardless of how you measure it, the Democratic Party did significantly better after 1992 than before 1992 in the popular vote, in both differences of means tests.

**Electoral College: Before 1992 and Through 1992**

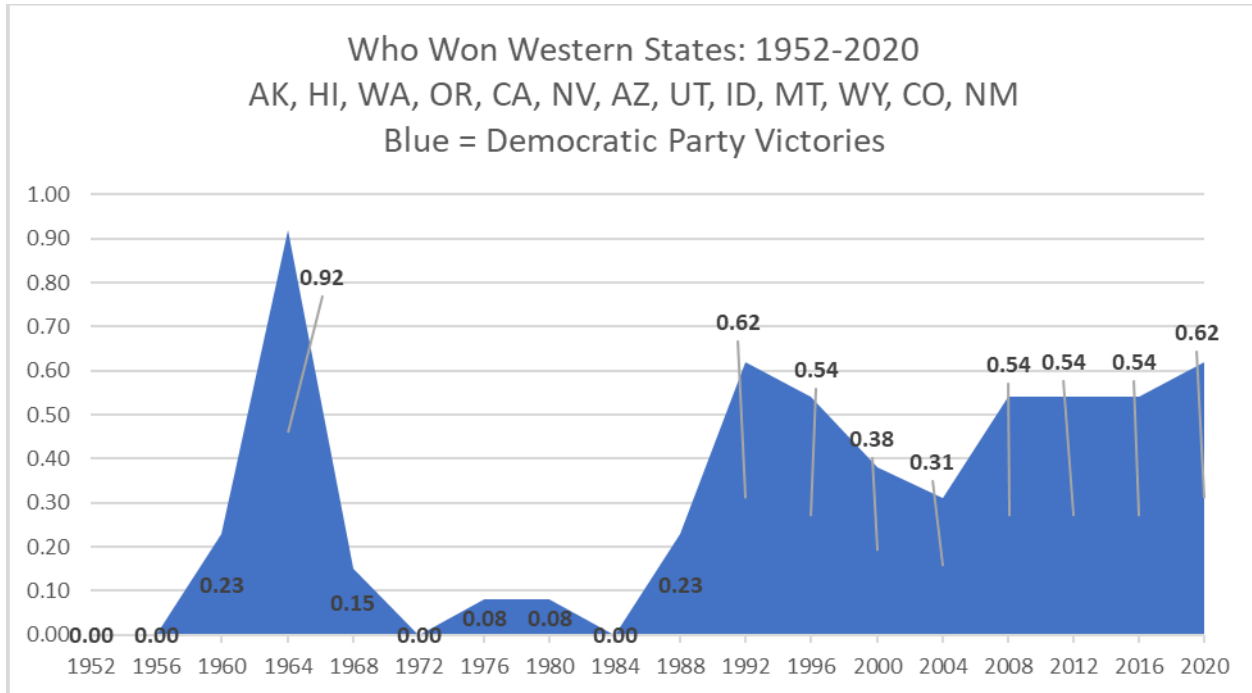
Our analysis of the Western states shows a dearth of support for the Democratic Party with the ascendancy of General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Democrats failed to take a single state in the 1950s and only took three of 13 states in 1960, two in 1968, none in 1972 and 1984, and only one Western state (Hawaii) in 1976 and 1980. The party only captured three of 13 Western states in 1988. The only exception was 1964, when President Lyndon B. Johnson, a Texan, bested Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater in 12 of 13 Western states.

But even with that clear outlier, Democrats won a mere 22 Western state contests out of 126 from 1952-1988, with more than half occurring in a single election. Republicans, meanwhile, won 108 of 126 possible Western states in the Electoral College over that same time frame, or 85.7% of all possible Western state contests in those 13 elections.

Even with the 1964 election, the Democratic Party only averaged 16.9 percent of all Western states per presidential election from 1952 to 1988. But that all changed in 1992 when the Democratic Party took eight of 13 Western states. The party proceeded to win a majority of Western states in five of the next seven elections, concluding with 2020 when the party took another eight of 13 states. That boosted the Democratic Party, with an average of 51.13% of Western states for the 1992-2020 elections, an increase of more than 30 percentage points from the prior 10 elections. As Table 10 shows, the t-ratio of the difference of means tests is 3.25, which is statistically significant at the .01 level, indicating that the increase in Democratic Party support in the West is statistically significant.

Such results are even stronger when we account for the percentage of Electoral College votes of the 13 states and not just the number of states. As you can see from the graphic, the percentage of Western Electoral College votes won by the Democratic Party from 1952-1988 was minuscule. Democrats did take 95% of the Electoral College votes in the West in 1964 but averaged 13.9 percent of the Western states in the Electoral College for all ten elections, even with 1964 in the mix. In 1988, Democrats only won 10 percent of the Western Electoral College votes and none in the election before that.

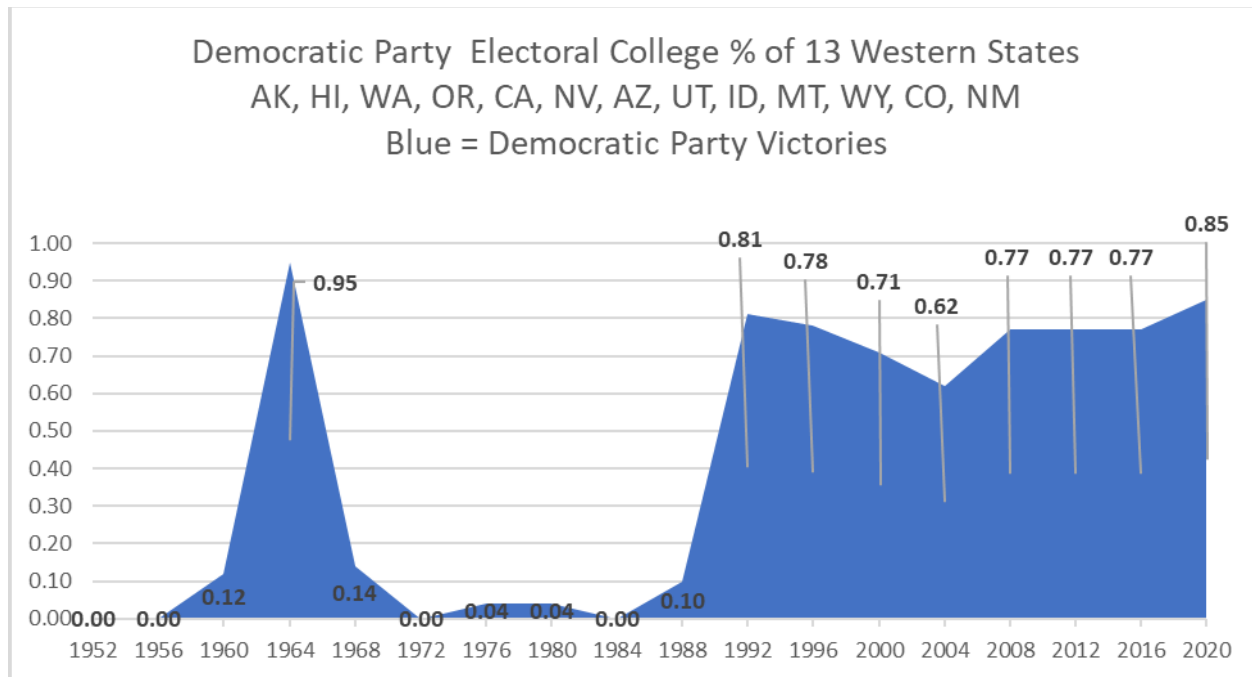
That all changed in 1992 when the percentage of Democratic Party votes in the Western states in the Electoral College jumped from 10% in 1988 to 81 percent. And the 1992 election was no fluke. From 1992 to 2020, the Democratic Party averaged 76 percent of the votes among the Western states in the Electoral College, taking 85% of that total in 2020. That



**Figure 1.** Number Of Western States Won By The Democratic Party, 1952-2020

**Table 11.** Difference Of Means Test, Percentage Of Western States Won By Democrats Comparing 1952-1988 To 1992-2020

	<i>1952-1988</i>	<i>1992-2020</i>	<i>Total</i>
N (elections)	10	8	18
Mean (% of Western States Won By Democrats)	16.90%	51.10%	32.11%
Difference Of Means		34.22%	
T Ratio and Significance Level	3.25 (p<.001)		



**Figure 2.** Number Of Western State Electoral College Votes Won By The Democratic Party, 1952 to 2020

average culminated in a t-ratio of 5.98, which is statistically significant below the .0001 level, showing that the Democratic Party did significantly better in the eight elections from 1992-2020 than they did in the ten before 1992 (see Table 11).

**Table 12.** Difference Of Means Test, Percentage Of Western State Electoral College Votes Won By Democrats, Comparing 1952-1988 To 1992-2020

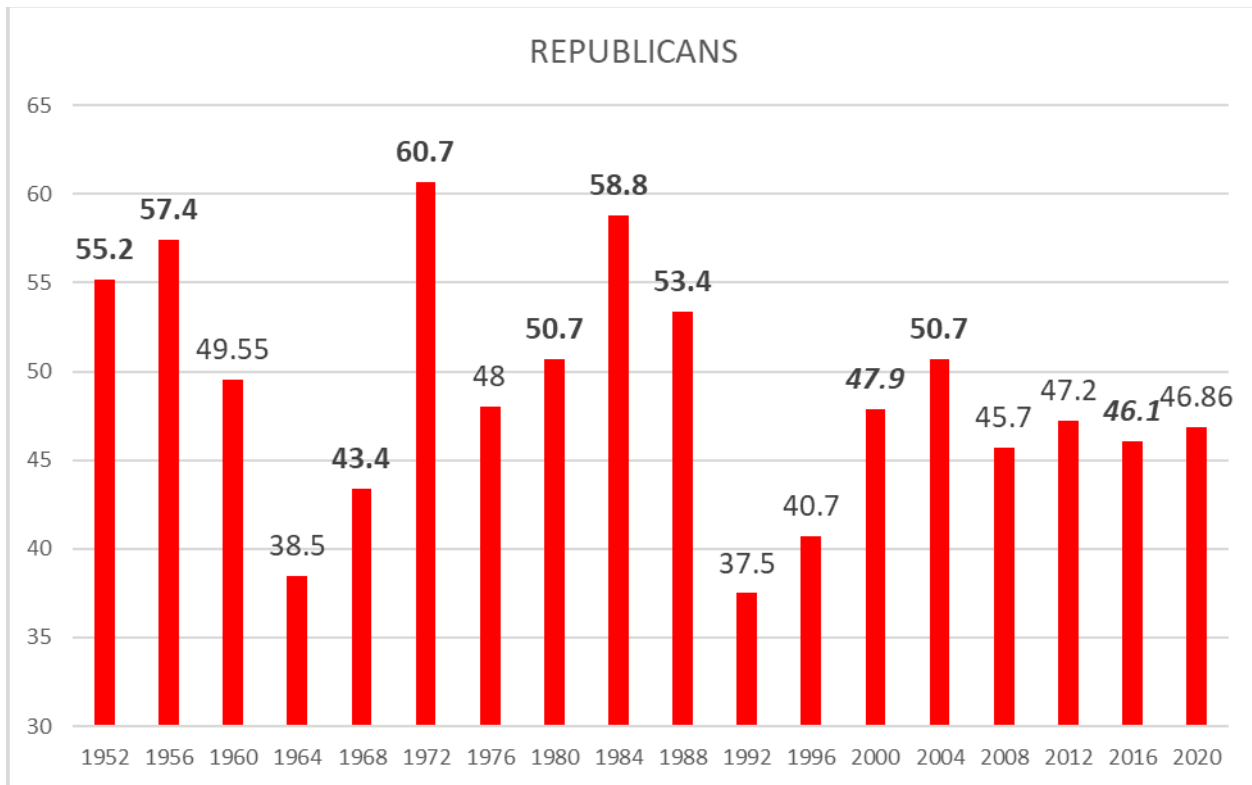
	1952-1988	1992-2020	Total
N (elections)	10	8	18
Mean (% of Western State Electoral College Votes Won By Democrats)	13.90%	76%	41.50%
Difference Of Means	62.10 percentage points		
T Ratio and Significance Level	5.89 (p<.0001)		

Such Electoral College numbers were not inconsequential. While the media focused on the Midwest and the Southeast for Joe Biden’s electoral fortunes in 2020, it’s clear that he could not have won with 14 percent of the 128 Electoral College votes in the West among the 13 states in the old days (1952-88). Now, with 85 percent of the Western states’ Electoral College votes, it helped him prevail in the 2020 presidential contest.

Of course, the Democratic Party’s fortunes out West are hardly an accident. Democrats began to take an increased interest in the region, from hosting the 2000 DNC Convention in Los Angeles and the 2008 DNC Convention in Denver, where Barack Obama was nominated at Mile High Stadium in a show event. Moreover, when California Senator Kamala Harris was nominated for the Vice-Presidential choice by the Democratic Party, it was the first time a candidate occupied a spot on the party’s ticket which was from west of Texas, with only a handful ever from a state west of one with the Mississippi River in it.

### National Presidential Election Implications

But did the Democrats’ ability to flip more than 80 percent of the Western votes in 1992, and maintain the majority of that region, assist in helping the national party prevail in U.S. Presidential elections? At first glance, it isn’t as easy to spot. Republican popular vote turnout appears all over the place, with highs and lows before 1992 and afterward.



**Figure 3.** Percentage of the Popular Vote Won by the Republican Party, 1952-2020

But a closer look at the averages indicates that from 1952 to 1988, Republican Presidential candidates average more than 51 percent of the vote, on average. That number dipped to 45.33 percent from 1992-2020, a statistically significant drop in performance in national elections for chief executive, in Table 12. Table 13, which reveals the GOP share of the two-party vote, has a similar six-point decline.

**Table 13.** Difference Of Means Test, Percentage Of National Presidential Election Popular Vote, Comparing Republican Vote % 1952-1988 To 1992-2020

	1952-1988	1992-2020	Total
N (elections)	10	8	18
Mean (% of National Presidential Election Popular Vote for the Republican Party)	51.65	45.33	48.8
Difference Of Means	6.23 percentage points		
T Ratio and Significance Level	2.21 (p<.05)		

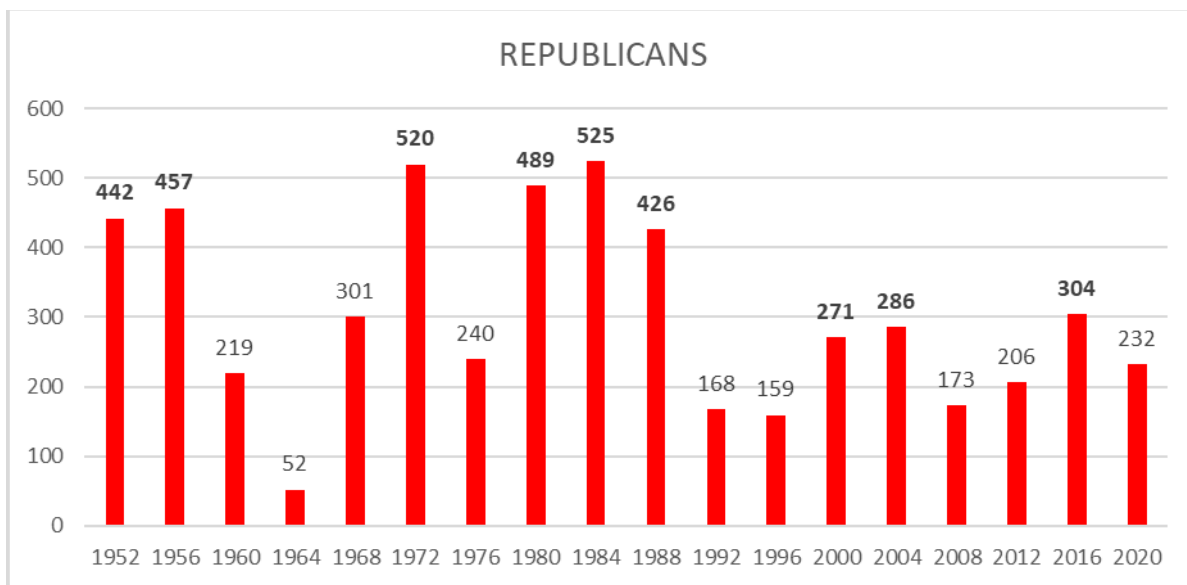
Table 13:

One must remember how Pomper (1993) wrote about the GOP’s “Electoral College Lock” before the 1992 election. This is confirmed by our analysis that from 1952 to 1988, which shows that Republicans averaged 367.1 Electoral College votes.

That Republican Party average slid to an average of 224.875 Electoral College votes after 1992, after the defection of the West, where Democrats were now capturing the overwhelming majority of the region in those 13 states. The plunge in GOP performance is also statistically significant (see Table 14). The party went from an average of nearly 100 Electoral College votes ahead of what was necessary to win to an average deficit of almost 50 Electoral College votes.

**Table 14.** Difference Of Means Test, Percentage Of National Presidential Election Popular Vote, Comparing Republican Vote %, Two-Party Shares Of Votes, 1952-1988 To 1992-2020

	1952-1988	1992-2020	Total
N (elections)	10	8	18
Mean (% of National Presidential Election Popular Vote For Republican Two-Party Shares Of Votes)	53.13%	47.97%	50.84%
Difference Of Means	5.16 percentage points		
T Ratio and Significance Level	2.13 (p<.05)		

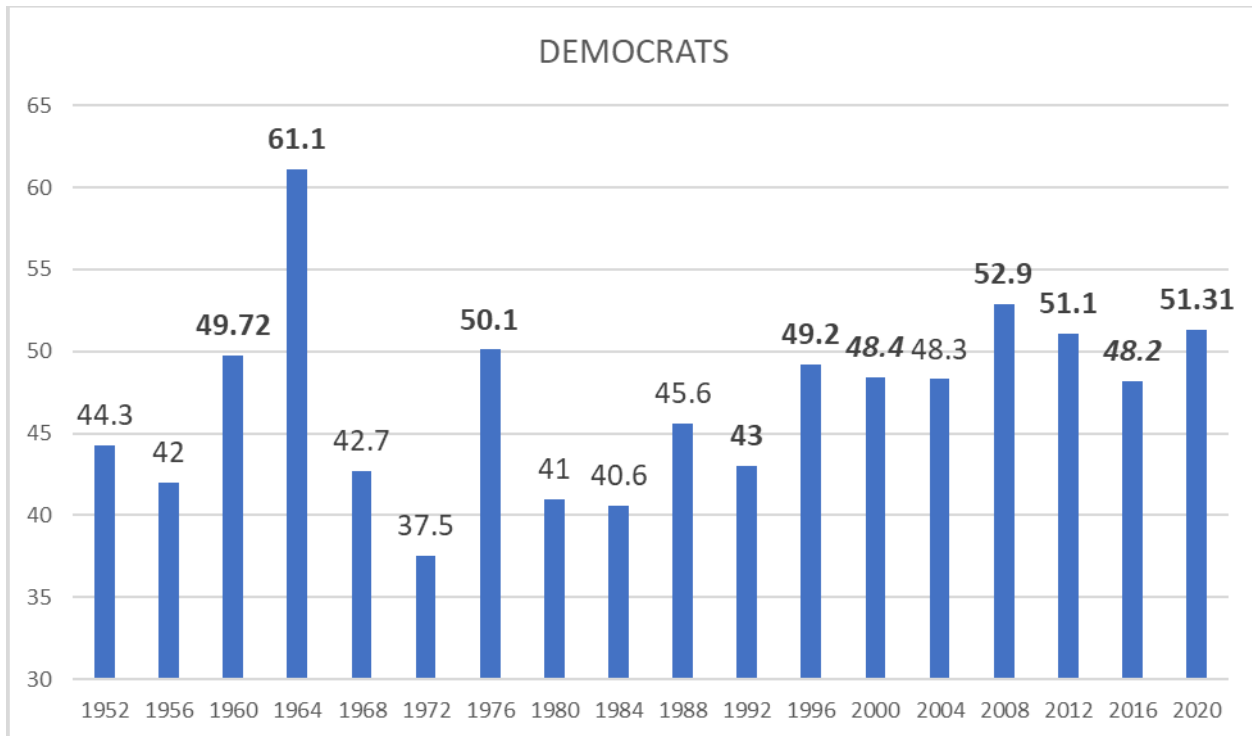


**Figure 4.** The Electoral College Vote Won by the Republican Party, 1952-2020

**Table 15.** Difference Of Means Test, Electoral College Votes From The National Presidential Election, Comparing Republican Vote %, Two-Party Shares Of Votes, 1952-1988 To 1992-2020

	1952-1988	1992-2020	Total
N (elections)	10	8	18
Mean (Electoral College Votes From The National Presidential Election, Republican Two-Party Shares Of Votes)	367.1	224.88	303.89
Difference Of Means	142.23 vote decline		
T Ratio and Significance Level	2.42 (p<.05)		

Democrats, on the other hand, appear to have reversed their poor performance beginning in 1992. Their party has climbed almost four percentage points on average to a 49 percent clip, and that's with several elections with a third party depressing overall numbers.



**Figure 5.** Percentage of the Popular Vote Won by the Democratic Party, 1952-2020

The results at just statistically significant at the .10 level, though in three of the last four years, the party has exceeded 50% in the polls, in Table 15. The GOP has only done so one time since 1988, and that was in 2004. When looking at Table 16, the Democratic Party's share of the two-party vote, the results are even stronger in showing the difference in the popular vote contest after 1992, a nearly six-point swing from just above 46% to 53%.

Democratic Party fortunes have especially increased over the last several election cycles. Whereas from 1952-1988, the party averaged only 162.9 Electoral College votes (even with the rout of 1964 included), 1992 was a different story for the Democratic Party.

Since that year, the party can now count on 312 Electoral College votes in each Presidential Election, enabling the party to win more often than not (see Table 17). Moreover, that increase brought on by changes in the West represents a statistically significant increase in Electoral College performance.

## Answering Critics Of Critical Elections & The West's Impact On The 1992-2020 Elections

### Is It Only California?

From 1952 to 1988, the Democrats only won the largest state in the USA once, and that was in 1964. From 1992 to 2020, the Democrats have California every year by wide margins. But what about the rest of the region? Is the Democrat's success in the West just a result of one state, California, flipping from the Republican Party to the Democrats?

To determine if this is the case, I look at how the Democrats performed in the West from 1992 to 2020 without California, the most populous state in the West, and the USA, for that matter (see Table 19).

In 1992, the Democrats took the rest of the West without the benefit of California, with 42 Electoral College votes to 23 for the GOP. The Clinton-Gore team repeated their success four years later, with a 39-26 advantage in the West, not counting California's 55 Electoral College votes. California was necessary to help the Democrats take the West in 2000 and 2004, but in both elections, the Democrats still did better than Dukakis in 1988 (with California, the Democrats won the West 82%-35% in 2000 and 77%-42% in 2004). By 2008, the Democrats reestablished their wider margin of victory, winning 41-28 non-California Electoral College votes. It was a similar story in 2012, with Democrats winning the West again with the Golden State 46-30.

**Table 16.** Difference Of Means Test, Percentage Of National Presidential Election Popular Vote, Comparing Democratic Vote %, 1952-1988 To 1992-2020

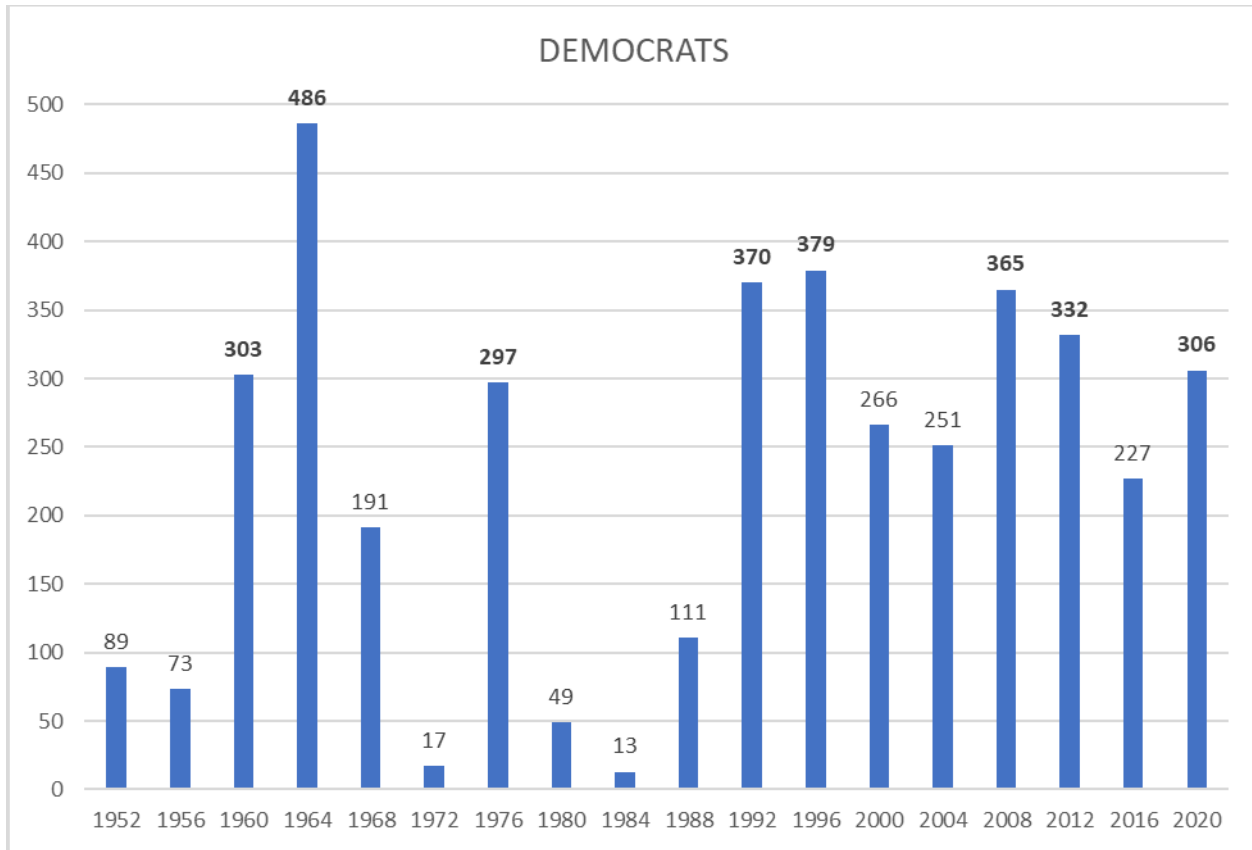
	<i>1952-1988</i>	<i>1992-2020</i>	<i>Total</i>
N (elections)	10	8	18
Mean (% of National Presidential Election Popular Vote for the Democratic Party)	45.46%	49.05%	47.06%
Difference Of Means		3.59%	
T Ratio and Significance Level	1.39 (p<.10)		

**Table 17.** Difference Of Means Test, Percentage Of National Presidential Election Popular Vote, Comparing Democratic Vote %, Two-Party Shares Of Votes, 1952-1988 To 1992-2020

	<i>1952-1988</i>	<i>1992-2020</i>	<i>Total</i>
N (elections)	10	8	18
Mean (% of National Presidential Election Popular Vote For Democratic Two-Party Shares Of Votes)	46.87%	52.03%	49.16%
Difference Of Means		5.16%	
T Ratio and Significance Level	2.13 (p<.05)		

**Table 18.** Difference Of Means Test, Electoral College Votes From The National Presidential Election, Comparing Democratic Vote %, Two-Party Shares Of Votes, 1952-1988 To 1992-2020

	<i>1952-1988</i>	<i>1992-2020</i>	<i>Total</i>
N (elections)	10	8	18
Mean (Electoral College Votes From The National Presidential Election, Democratic Two-Party Shares Of Votes)	162.9	312	229.17
Difference Of Means		149.1	
T Ratio and Significance Level	2.57 (p<.05)		



**Figure 6.** The Electoral College Vote Won by the Democratic Party, 1952-2020

**Table 19.** The Performance Of Both Parties In The West, Without California

<i>Party/Year</i>	1952	1956	1960	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988
Dem	0	0	10	55	13	0	4	4	0	21
GOP	47	47	43	5	42	57	53	53	64	43
<i>Party/Year</i>	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2020		
Dem	42	39	27	22	41	46	46	57		
GOP	23	26	35	42	28	30	30	19		

Even in defeat in 2016, Hillary Clinton also won the West without California, 46 Electoral College votes to Trump’s 30 E.C. votes in the West. In 2020, the Biden-Harris team won 57 Electoral College votes without California to Trump’s 19. Clearly, the evidence shows that even without California, the Democrats prevailed in the West in six of eight elections in the Electoral College: 1992, 1996, 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020. Only in the remaining two (2000, 2004) did the Democrats need California to prevail in the West in the Electoral College. It is fair to say, with a 75% success rate without the state of California; we cannot conclude that the Democratic Party won the West only because they won the largest state.

**The Democrats in 2000 and 2004**

Clearly, the presidential teams of Al Gore in 2000 and John Kerry in 2004 did not perform as well in the West and nationally as the Bill Clinton teams of 1992 and 1996, as well as Barack Obama’s ticket in 2008 and 2012. But, that does not invalidate the results for these reasons.

First, as the preceding section shows, the Democrats still won the West in 2000 and 2004. It was the only time since 1992 that the party needed California to do it. Second, the Democrats dramatically improved their performance in gubernatorial and senatorial races between 1998 and 2008. As these results show, Republicans held an 8-5 advantage in the governor’s mansion in 1998. By 2008, the Democrats flipped the region to a 7-6 lead in governorships (see Table 20).

**Table 20.** Western Governor’s Races By Party, 1998 To 2008

<i>GOV</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2008</i>
Alaska	D		R		R	
Arizona	R		D		D	
California	D		D		R	
Colorado	R		R		D	
Hawaii	D		R		R	
Idaho	R		R		R	
Montana		R		D		D
Nevada	R		R		R	
New Mexico	R		D		D	
Oregon	D		D		D	
Utah		R		R		R
Washington		D		D		D
Wyoming	R		D		D	

In 1998, in the 13 Western states, Republicans held a 15-11 advantage in Senators. Ten years later, Democrats converted that number into a 16-10 lead in U.S. Senators (see Table 21).

**Table 21.** Western U.S. Senate Races By Party, 1998 To 2008

<i>SEN</i>	<i>1998</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2008</i>
Alaska	R		R	R		D
Arizona	R	R		R	R	
California	D	D		D	D	
Colorado	R		R	D		D
Hawaii	D	D		D	D	
Idaho	R		R	R		R
Montana		R	D		D	D
Nevada	D	R		D	R	
New Mexico		D	R		D	D
Oregon	D		R	D		D
Utah	R	R		R	R	
Washington	D	D		D	D	
Wyoming		R	R		R	R

A map of campaign spending in 2004 shows only five Western states received any ad-buys of \$1 million in the 2004 election:

New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington (Pfeiffer 2014). Clearly, the region received less attention from the party that contest than the individual parties, which were able to expand the reach of the Democrats during the same time frame.

**It's Who Wins**

It can be argued that since the days of FDR and Truman, no party has won five straight elections. In fact, since then, only one party has won three straight presidential contests (the GOP: 1980, 1984, 1988). But that belies two major facts. From 1952-1988, the GOP wins 7 of 10 Electoral College contests, all but one by margins of more than 7.5 percent in the popular vote and victories averaging 373.86 points. For the Democrats' 3 wins, there were two nail-biters (0.17 percentage points, 2.1 percentage points) and only one landslide: 22.6 percentage points, with a 100+ E.C. vote advantage once (1964).

It was a definite change in the following electoral cycle, from 1992-2020. In those, Democrats won seven of eight popular vote elections, losing only 2004 by 2.4 percentage points. They still won five of eight presidential elections by an average of 162.8 E.C. votes. Their three losses were by an average of 39 E.C. votes (see Table 21).

**Table 22.** Performance By Both Parties, Electoral College & Popular Vote, 1952-2020

<i>Party Performance and Contest</i>	<i>Electoral College Wins</i>	<i>Popular Vote Wins</i>	<i>Landslide (Win EC By 100+ E.C. Votes)</i>
1952-1988 Republicans	70%	70%	7
1952-1988 Democrats	30%	30%	1
1992-2020 Republican	37.50%	12.50%	0
1992-2020 Democrats	62.50%	87.50%	4

None of the close state "controversial" margins for the Democrats in 2000 and 2016 were from the West. These close states that invited "controversy" for their narrow margins were Florida, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Michigan. In the 2020 election, Trump's unsupported allegations of fraud were only centered in a single Western state: Arizona, whose votes would not have provided the margin of victory that year. The other scrutinized states include Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan, and now Georgia.

**How the West Helped Democrats Offset the Loss of the South in Party Politics**

There is a realization among scholars that the Republicans were able to strengthen their hand in presidential elections with the victory of Richard Nixon in 1968 and the subsequent "Southern Strategy." This enabled the GOP to make historic gains in the South that it had never made, during presidential contests once dominated by the Democrats in the New Deal Era into regular landslide victories.

The West changed all of that in 1992. While the region went for Republicans in every election from 1952 to 1988 with one exception, the evidence shows a dramatic swing towards the Democratic Party in 1992, dumping the Reagan-Bush coalition that had produced three straight victories. And those gains persisted after 1992, as Democrats (1) won the West every election from 1992 to 2020, (2) won 7 of the next 8 popular vote contests for U.S. President, and (3) a majority of presidential elections in the Electoral College, even with two historic setbacks after receiving the most votes (2000, 2016).<sup>8</sup> Just as the South helped the GOP win several landslides, the West in 1992 put Democrats back in the game, even enough to win more contests.

**Conclusion**

The results show that 1992 was a watershed year for the Democratic Party, both in the West and in national contests. The secular change theory cannot explain both the spike in Western support for the Democratic Party, sharply increasing in 1992, and persisting through 2020. Nor can that theory explain the reversal of Democratic Party defeats from the 1950s-1980s, producing a majority of wins from the 1990s through 2020 with average performances in the popular vote and Electoral College, which are statistically significant improvements in results between those two different time frames.

The most obvious question is why so few have recognized this dramatic shift for the Democratic Party in the West and how this has significantly upgraded their performance in presidential contests. Here are a few reasons why such a realignment has gone relatively unnoticed in the media.

<sup>8</sup>There is some wonder whether the overwhelming shift of the West to the Democratic column could possibly set up the party for more cases of winning popular votes yet losing the Electoral College, given the nature of the latter to have small states have a disproportionate advantage in the ratio of Electoral College to popular votes.

First of all, myths are hard to shake. When asked to conjure up a Westerner, many think of someone from eras past, like a rancher, a miner, an oilman, a logger, and a hunter or fisherman. We don't even consider the geeky white computer scientist, the Asian-American engineer, the Hispanic entrepreneur, the African-American attorney, or the female Senator, yet all are Westerners today. Nor do we consider the wind turbine as readily as the oil derrick or how the hunter and fishing industry workers have rethought their priorities as their livelihoods are threatened by anti-green initiatives. The John Wayne movie is no longer the only story of the West nor the best representation of today's West.

Second of all, the Democratic victories of 1992 and beyond don't look as dramatic as the Nixon and Reagan landslides, but we're not comparing apples with apples in such analyses. Compared to the showing of the McGovern and Mondale, Clinton and Obama have far more impressive performances, even if their wins are 53%-47% victories. And that's where the real analysis must be made to determine if a realignment has taken place. Moreover, with a sizable third-party presence in Perot, the waters look more muddied yet become even more clear when looking at two-party support for candidates. Even without such measures, the graphic representations make the spikes visually apparent, reinforced by statistical tests.

Third, some critical elections supporters often relied heavily on anecdotal and non-quantitative evidence, ignoring the in-depth statistical tests of Key's 1955 research and work others have done to reveal such realignments. As a result, the field appeared to be ceded to those critics quick to discredit critical elections. Critics have also confused secular trends with secular results, and critical trends do not receive the same attention. As a result, some in the scholarly community have declared the secular realignment thesis as having won the debate, leading us to miss such huge fundamental shifts which would have been easier to spot with an open mind.

## Acknowledgements

LaGrange College undergraduate Nicole Morales contributed to the research for several hypothesis tests. The author would also like to thank Chase Davis, Benjamin Taylor, Sean Richey, and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

## References

- Abramson, Paul R., John H. Aldrich, and David W. Rohde. 1994. *Change and Continuity in the 1992 Elections*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.
- Baker, Ross K. 1993. "Sorting Out and Suing Up: The Presidential Nominations." In *The Election of 1992*. Gerald M. Pomper, ed. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.
- Balentine, Matthew D. and Gerald R. Webster. 2018. "The Changing Electoral Landscape of the Western United States." *The Professional Geographer*. 70(4): 566-582.
- Brunell, Thomas L. and Bernard Grofman. 1998, "Explaining Divided U.S. Senate Delegations, 1788-1996: A Realignment Approach." *American Political Science Review*. 92, 2 (June):
- Brunell, Thomas L., Bernard Grofman and Samuel Merrill III, 2012. "Magnitude and Durability of Electoral Change: Identifying Critical Elections in the U.S. Congress 1854-2010." *Electoral Studies*. 31: 816-828.
- Budge, Joel. et al. 1981. "The 1896 Election and Congressional Modernization: An Appraisal of the Evidence." *Social Science History*. 5, 1 (Winter): 53-90.
- Burnham, Walter Dean. 1970. *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Burnham, Walter Dean. 1993 "The Legacy of George Bush." In *The Election of 1992*. Gerald M. Pomper, ed. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.
- Burton, Steven. 1998. Bank Trends - Ranking the Risk of Overbuilding in Commercial Real Estate Markets. Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Bank Trends - Ranking the Risk of Overbuilding in Commercial Real Estate Markets.
- Campbell, Angus, et al. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York: Wiley.
- Carmines, Edward G., and James A. Stimson. 1989. *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Congressional Quarterly*. 2002. *Presidential Elections, 1789-2000*. Washington DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.
- Congressional Research Service. 2019. "Base Closure and Realignment (BRAC): Background and Issues for Congress." [EveryCRSReport.com](https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R45705.html). R45705. April 25.
- <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R45705.html>
- Dawsey, Darrell. 1990. "25 Years After The Watts Riots: McCone Commission's Recommendations Have Gone Unheeded." *L.A. Times*. July 8. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-07-08-me-455-story.html>
- Dzialo, Mary C.; Shank, Susan E.; Smith, David C. 1993. "Atlantic and Pacific Coasts' Labor Markets Hit Hard in the Early 1990s." *Monthly Labor Review*. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 116 (2): 32-39. Retrieved April 6, 2011.
- Elazar, Daniel J. 1984. *American Federalism: A View from the States, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. New York, NY: Harper & Row Publishers.

- Ewing, Cortez A. M. 1962. "Constitutional Crisis in the American Party System." *The Southwestern Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (June): 8-18
- Gardner, Jennifer M. 1994. "The 1990-1991 Recession: How Bad was the Labor Market?" *Monthly Labor Review*. Bureau of Labor Statistics. 117 (6): 3–11. Retrieved April 6, 2011. "[The 1990-1991 Recession: How Bad was the Labor Market?](#)"
- Gardner, Jennifer, Steven Hipple and Thomas Nardone. 1994. "The Labor Market Improves in 1993." *Monthly Labor Review*. February. Gardner Hipple Nardone [Monthly Labor Review 1993 1990-1991 Recession.pdf](#)
- Garreau, Joel. 1981. *The Nine Nations of North America*. New York City, NY: Avon Books.
- Hero, Rodney E., and Caroline J. Tolbert. 1996. "A Racial/Ethnic Diversity Interpretation of Politics and Policy in the States of the U.S." *American Journal of Political Science*. 40, 3 (August): 851-871.
- Hui, Iris and David O. Sears. 2018. "Reexamining the Effect of Racial Propositions on Latinos' Partisanship in California." *Political Behavior*. 40: 147-174.
- Hunt, Darnell. 2012. "American Toxicity: Twenty Years After the 1992 Los Angeles Riots." *Amerasia Journal*. 38, 1: ix-xviii.
- Ivins, Molly. 1992. "Notes From Another Country." *The Nation*. September 14.
- Johnston, Ron. 2017. "Was the 2016 United States presidential contest a deviating election? Continuity and change in the electoral map – or 'Plus ça change, plus ç'est la même géographie.'" *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion, and Parties*, 27 (4): 369-388.
- Judis, John B. and Rudy Teixeira. 2004. *The Emerging Democratic Majority*. New York, NY: Scribner.
- Key, Jr. V. O. 1955. "A Theory of Critical Elections." *The Journal of Politics*. 17, 1 (February): 3-18.
- Knuckey, Jonathan. 1999. "Classification of Presidential Elections: An Update." *Polity*. 31, 4 (Summer): 639-653.
- Korey, John and Edward L. Lascher. 2006. Micropartisanship in California. *Public Opinion Quarterly*. 70(1).
- Lewis-Beck, Michael S. et al. 2008. *The American Voter Revisited*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.
- Lichtman, Allan J. 1976. "Critical Election Theory and the Reality of American Presidential Politics, 1916–1940." *American Historical Review* 81(2): 317–51.
- Mayhew, David R. 2000. "Electoral Realignments." *Annual Review of Political Science*. 3: 449-474.
- Mayhew, David R. 2002. *Electoral Realignments: A Critique of an American Genre, 1<sup>st</sup> Generation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Mayhew, David R. 2008. *Electoral Realignments: A Critique of an American Genre, 2nd Generation*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- McWilliams, Wilson Carey. 1993. In *The Election of 1992*. Gerald M. Pomper, ed. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.
- Nardone, Thomas, Diane Herz, Earl Mellor, and Steven Hipple. 1993. "1992: Job Market In The Doldrums." *Monthly Labor Review*. February.
- National Equity Atlas. 2022. "How Equity Matters." National Equity Atlas. [https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Diversity\\_index#/?breakdown=1&geo=02000000000005000](https://nationalequityatlas.org/indicators/Diversity_index#/?breakdown=1&geo=02000000000005000)
- New York Times*. 2008. "Election Results 2008." *New York Times*, November 5. <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/national-exit-polls.html> (accessed November 4, 2011).
- Nugent, Walter. 2018. *Color-Coded*. Norman, OK: Oklahoma University Press.
- Pew Research Center. 2019. "Political Independents: Who They Are, What They Think." PRC. March 14. <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2019/03/14/political-independents-who-they-are-what-they-think/>.
- Pfeiffer, Abigail. 2014. "Battleground and Swing States." Politicize Ultimate Politics Theme. [cphcmp.smu.edu/2004election/battleground-swing-states/](http://cphcmp.smu.edu/2004election/battleground-swing-states/)
- Pomper, Gerald M. 1967. "Classification of Presidential Elections." *The Journal of Politics*. 29, 3 (August): 535-566.
- Pomper, Gerald M. 1993. *The Election of 1992*. Gerald M. Pomper, ed. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.
- Rankin, David M. 2009. "The West On the Electoral Frontier." In *Winning the White House*, Kevin J. McMahon, ed. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rogin, Michael. 1969. "California Populism and the "System of 1896"" *The Western Political Quarterly*, 22, 1 (March): 179-196
- Sabato, Larry. 1988. *The Party's Just Begun*. Northbrook, IL: Scott, Foresman & Co.
- Sarasohn, David. 1980. "The Election of 1916: Realigning the Rockies." *Western Historical Quarterly* 11, 3 (July): 285-305.
- Schofield, Norman, Gary Miller, and Andrew Martin. 2003. "Critical Elections and Political Realignments in the USA: 1860-2000." *Political Studies*. 51: 217-240.
- Segura, Gary M. and Luis R. Fraga. 2008. "Race and the Recall: Racial and Ethnic Polarization in the California Recall Election." *American Journal of Political Science*. 52, 2 (April): 421-435.
- Shover, John L. 1967. "Was 1928 a Critical Election in California?" *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 58, 4 (October): 196-204.
- Sides, John. 2016. "How Did The Dramatic Election of 1968 Change U.S. Politics? This New Book Explains." *Washington Post*. May 25.

- Smith, Adam I. P. 2015. "Beyond the Realignment Synthesis: The 1860 Election Reconsidered." *America at the Ballot Box*, 59-74. Gareth Davies and Julian E. Zelizer. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Sterner, Bernard. 1975. "The Emergence of the New Deal Party System: A Problem in Historical Analysis of Voter Behavior" *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 6, 1 (Summer): 127-149
- Sundquist, James L. 1973. "Whither the American Party System?" *Political Science Quarterly*. 88, 4 (December): 559-581.
- Sundquist, James L. 1983. *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States*. Revised ed. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Vandello, Joseph A. and Dov Cohen. 1999. "Patterns of Individualism and Collectivism Across the United States." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. August 1.
- Young, Nancy Beck. 2019. *Two Suns of the Southwest: Lyndon Johnson, Barry Goldwater, and the 1964 Battle Between Liberalism and Conservatism*. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press.