

Journal of the Arkansas Academy of Science

Volume 8

Article 20


1955

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Recommended Citation

Strack, C. M. (1955) "Spatial Associations of the 1948, 1952 Presidential Vote," *Journal of the Arkansas Academy of Science*: Vol. 8 , Article 20.

Available at: <http://scholarworks.uark.edu/jaas/vol8/iss1/20>

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SPATIAL ASSOCIATIONS OF THE 1948, 1952
PRESIDENTIAL VOTE

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Certain regions of the United States have become sufficiently well defined so that they are common terms and definite areas in the minds of the general population. Such terms as "the South," "the Corn Belt," "the Wheat Belt," and others are commonly used for their respective sections of the nation. In addition to these, there is a variety of other fractional divisions based on economic, soils, rainfall, and physiographic criteria. There are some sections frequently thought of as political strongholds for one or another party for reasons of sentiment or point of view.

There has been little emphasis on delimiting political regions or correlating them with other spatially distributed characteristics. The work of Robinson and Key illustrates an attempt in this direction. As an exploration of this possible association, it is desired herein to examine aspects of the vote distribution in the 1948 and 1952 presidential elections. It was hoped that such an examination would be useful in furnishing a criterion for national regions of political interest.

The initial data employed consisted of the county-by-county vote returns. These were transferred to percentage figures and an isopleth map was plotted for each major party in the 1948 election. An examination of these maps made it clear that the Republican party vote was reflected in every county and thus was a more consistent national reflection of political interest than was the Democratic and Dixiecrat vote. Consequently, only the maps showing the percentage of votes for the Republican candidates were used. The 1952 election was mapped in a similar manner. A comparison of these maps disclosed several areas where the patterns repeated. Certain of these apparently consistent patterns were selected for additional examination. Other sections may have been used and may eventually be more consistent. However, the following were chosen:

1. The South
2. Central Valley of California
3. Southern Utah
4. The Southern Highlands
5. Coastal Maine
6. Great Plains (north)
7. Northeast Missouri

The most clearly similar isopleths for the above selections were then transferred to another map (Figure 1) where their relationships might be more carefully studied. It was thought that the comparisons could possibly be made on two bases, that of a margin or boundary zone, and that between core areas of the regions. The two emphases possible are employed as feasible on this exploratory level. Furthermore, the intensity of the political interest is reflected in different percentages for each year. The following comments treat each area in respect to the patterns seen.

The voting boundaries in southeastern United States, "The South," occur where expected and show an obvious association to other patterns. The general-type-of-farming map prepared by the Department of Agriculture shows a clear association between the cotton-farming boundary and the bounds shown by the 1952, (50%) and the 1948, (30%) voting line (see map). No other association is so clear. This correlation appears to be of special interest across Oklahoma and Arkansas, Tennessee and Georgia. Within "The South" there are sections of interest in western Tennessee and northern Alabama. The 1952, (50%) line in the Mississippi bottoms does not show in 1948, but may be hidden by the political-party splits of that year. The sometimes-termed "Florida Yankee" area is reflected in the northern and southern sections of the state.

The "Southern Highlands" area seems to have affected the voting pattern, in that the Kentucky Blue Grass section shows some association with the pattern in this part of the state. In the Carolina Mountains area, the vote pattern is

clearly modified, but the basis for these changes is not clear. The importance of certain attitudes not necessarily related to the cotton growing south appears in the discordance of the type-of-farming line and the voting margin in the Virginia-North Carolina section.

The California area evinces a repetition of the dividing lines which correspond roughly to the central valley and Los Angeles lowland. It is suggested that the specialty agriculture of these localities may be pertinent factors. Farm-type maps show no clear picture. Within the central valley there are two centers of similar pattern. One is focused on Solano County, the other on Kings and Fresno counties.

Reflected primarily in Kane County, Utah, is an area of pattern correspondence. This little section stands out more by contrast than by correspondence to adjacent areas. Mormon and highly rural settlement may be the key to this pattern.

Coastal Maine is a small section where there is a repeated pattern which also maintains consistent party sentiment. The conservative "Yankee" settlement is the apparent clue to this correspondence. This is an area with a highly rural population who have a high level of living. Farming is small-scale dairy and truck farming. Summer resort activity is important.

The area of close correspondence in Northeast Missouri is outstanding. No other similar pattern has thus far been noted. This is a slightly above-average farm area of the corn belt variety. No special crops, population groups or religions are known to be in this area.

The northern part of the Great Plains, along the eastern margin especially, has several areas where the boundaries (see map) show correlation. Along with this section we may also note the association occurring in northern Minnesota. The latter lines follow generally across the dividing zone separating what is termed the cut-over area. The parts to the northeast are less productive in agriculture.

The correlations on the Great Plains margins are erratic and none too well defined, but in locations such as eastern Nebraska and South Dakota, eastern Kansas and Oklahoma there are highly similar patterns. There are known transitions between corn and wheat occurring in these areas. Cotton is involved on the Oklahoma sections. John Weaver is considering the changing corn-belt-agriculture map patterns which are related in the Dakota-Nebraska portion. H. H. McCarty, in considering various measures of regional boundaries through the same section, finds a zone of change which bears resemblance to the political preference lines.

The foregoing, along with such smaller areas as that of Ellis County, Kansas, and Wheeler, Greeley, and Howard Counties in Nebraska encourage the contention that there are discoverable associations to be found between the political voting patterns on presidential elections and other patterns in the area. Some aspects of the type of farming and zones of agricultural change may be found to be closely associated.

In retrospect, therefore, it is suggested that voting distributions show persistent patterns which can be associated with patterns of economic and type-of-farming regions, and may well be used as an indicator for other correlations. Added investigation is thought warranted.

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