

# Realignment and the Rise of Two-Party Competition in Virginia 1945-1980

From 1890 to 1944, Virginia's political landscape was dominated by the Democratic Party. The GOP had not won a statewide race since 1881, and Democrats held a majority in both houses of the state legislature. However, beginning in 1948, the state began to trend Republican, a shift that was part of a larger national trend known as the "realignment era." By 1980, the GOP had become the dominant party in Virginia, and the state had become one of the most competitive two-party states in the country.



## The Dynamic Dominion: Realignment and the Rise of Two-Party Competition in Virginia, 1945-1980

by Frank B. Atkinson

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

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A number of factors contributed to this realignment. One was the rise of the Republican Party in the South. In the aftermath of the Civil War, the Republican Party was seen as the party of Lincoln and emancipation, and it enjoyed strong support among African Americans in the South. However, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Republican Party in the South

became increasingly dominated by white supremacists, and African Americans abandoned the party in droves. As a result, the Republican Party became a regional party, with little support outside of the South.

Beginning in the 1940s and 1950s, the Republican Party began to make inroads in the South. This was due in part to the growing influence of national issues, such as the Cold War and the civil rights movement. Republicans were able to portray themselves as the party of national security and economic prosperity, while Democrats were seen as the party of big government and social change. As a result, Republicans began to win elections in the South, and by the 1980s, the GOP had become the dominant party in most southern states, including Virginia.

Another factor that contributed to the realignment in Virginia was the changing demographics of the state. In the early 20th century, Virginia was a largely rural state, with a large population of African Americans. However, in the post-World War II era, Virginia began to experience a period of rapid economic growth, and the state became increasingly urbanized. This led to an influx of new voters, many of whom were white and Republican.

Finally, the realignment in Virginia was also influenced by the growing influence of national issues. In the 1940s and 1950s, national issues such as the Cold War and the civil rights movement began to play a more important role in Virginia politics. Republicans were able to portray themselves as the party of national security and economic prosperity, while Democrats were seen as the party of big government and social change. As a result, Republicans began to win elections in Virginia, and by the 1980s, the GOP had become the dominant party in the state.

The realignment of Virginia's politics had a profound impact on the state. It led to the end of one-party rule in Virginia, and it made the state one of the most competitive two-party states in the country. The realignment also had a significant impact on the national political landscape, as it helped to pave the way for the Republican Party's dominance of national politics in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.



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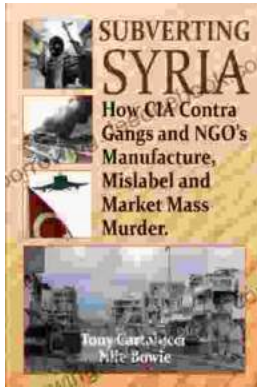
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