



Examination of the Electoral College Outcomes in the Period from 1964 to 1988

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Electoral College, a crucial part of the American presidential election process, has long been a source of curiosity and controversy. Initially created to balance public will and federalism, the Electoral College has had a significant impact on presidential election results.

The period from 1964 to 1988 marked a significant era in the electoral history of the United States, witnessing transformative changes both domestically and globally. The United States went through social and political upheavals, economic changes, and geopolitical events, all of which significantly influenced the results of the elections and presidential campaigns. We can learn a lot about how these events altered the political environment and influenced the strategies of presidential candidates by looking at the Electoral College results and the developments that took place in the U.S. and throughout the world during this time. The goal of this article is to examine the research done on Electoral College results from 1964 to 1988, providing a thorough description of the findings while discussing the interaction between major historical transformations and the electoral process in the United States.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on the total number of members of Congress, there are 538 electors in the Electoral College. According to its congressional representation, each state is given a certain number of electors. Voters cast ballots for a slate of electors who have vowed their support to a certain presidential candidate. In most states, the candidate who receives the most votes in the popular vote receives all of the state's electoral votes. Due to the proportional distribution of electoral votes, Nebraska and Maine depart from this "winner-take-all" rule (Naele, 2017).

After the general election, the electors meet in their respective state capitals to cast their votes officially for president and vice president. While some states demand that voters keep their promises, others do not, opening the door for "faithless electors." Following certification, the results of the electoral votes are declared at a joint session of Congress, usually on January 6th. To win the presidency, a candidate must receive at least 270 electoral votes.

If no candidate receives a majority, a dependent election is held. The top three candidates are put to a vote in the House of Representatives, with one vote going to each state delegation. The Senate chooses the top two candidates to serve as vice president. However, since the 12th Amendment was ratified in 1804, there hasn't been a contingent election (Neale, 2017).

Over the years, there has been criticism of and discussion about the Electoral College system. Critics note that candidates who lose the popular vote can still win the presidency (Yoo, 2018). In distinction, supporters of the Electoral College maintain that the system ensures political stability and balances the interests of smaller and populous states. The system continues to be a distinguishing element of the American presidential election process, influencing both the candidates' strategies and the results of elections.

Critics of the Electoral College system reveal how it can be skewed by the formation of political parties. In essence, such a system still follows the plurality rule, which states that whichever candidate

wins the most votes, without the need to surpass the threshold of 50%, will become the winner of the election. If we look at election results from 1964 - 1988, we see this clearly: the results can be intensely influenced by various societal situations.

3. ELECTIONS START FROM 1964 - 1988

The American election of 1964 marked a turning point in American political history. The Democratic Party's nominee for president, Lyndon B. Johnson, and the Republican Party's choice, Senator Barry Goldwater, were the two leading contenders. After President John F. Kennedy was killed in 1963, Lyndon B. Johnson became president. He ran for office on his own. His campaign stressed his dedication to Kennedy's legacy and to furthering the Great Society and civil rights legislation. The Republican Party was more ideologically conservative. Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater promoted a strict anti-communist attitude, reduced government involvement, and a powerful national defense (Berrington, 1965).

In 1968, Hubert Humphrey of the Democratic Party and George Wallace of the American Independent Party lost to Richard Nixon of the Republican Party. Humphrey received 191, Wallace 46, and Nixon 301 electoral votes. Nixon prevailed with around 43.4% of the vote. In 1972, Richard Nixon was elected to a second term. This time, McGovern received 17 electoral votes compared to Nixon's 520. One of the biggest triumphs in American history, Nixon won with almost 60.7% of the popular vote. In 1976, Gerald Ford, the incumbent president, lost to Democratic candidate Jimmy Carter. Ford earned only 240 electoral votes, while Carter secured 297. Carter triumphed with almost 50.1% of the vote. In 1980, Ronald Reagan (Republican Party) prevailed against incumbent President Jimmy Carter (Democratic Party) and John B. Anderson (Independent). Anderson earned no electoral votes, while Carter and Reagan received 49 and 489 respectively. Reagan prevailed with almost 50.7% of the vote. In 1984, Ronald Reagan was reelected. In this election, Mondale earned 13 electoral votes to Reagan's 525. Reagan's win, which was the biggest landslide in American history, was achieved with around 58.8% of the vote. In 1988, Michael Dukakis (Democratic Party) lost to George H.W. Bush (Republican Party). Bush won 426 electoral votes compared to Dukakis' 111. Bush prevailed with almost 53.4% of the vote.

4. MAJOR CHANGES AT THAT TIME

4.1. Societal Issues

During this period, social and political upheaval influenced election results. The first major event to impact election results was the Civil Rights Movement. From the middle of the 1950s until the late 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement sought to guarantee equal rights and end racial discrimination and segregation. Civil disobedience, grassroots organization, and nonviolent protests were hallmarks of the movement. The Montgomery Bus Boycott, led by Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King Jr.'s presidency of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) are notable occasions and individuals. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which attempted to remove obstacles to African American voting rights, are two of the Civil Rights Movement's most significant accomplishments. Both challenged racial inequality and shaped the political and social landscape of the United States. The civil rights struggle, epitomized by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, transformed the political landscape.

This liberal movement affected political landscapes in several ways. The Civil Rights movement enfranchised and empowered African American voters. As a result, there was a discernible rise in the number of African Americans who registered to vote and took part in elections. This change in voter demographics affected results, particularly in states with sizable African American populations.

The Civil Rights Movement also had a profound impact on political party affiliation, particularly in Southern states that had been known for their histories of racial segregation and discrimination. Traditionally, these states had been strongholds of support for the Democratic Party. However, as the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum and advocated for reforms, a division formed within the Democratic Party. Opposition to civil rights measures emerged among certain Democrats, notably those from the South, who resisted the push for racial equality. Simultaneously, other Democrats embraced the movement and its goals. This internal rift within the Democratic Party ultimately led to a significant shift in political allegiance.

The repercussions of this division became evident through a strategic approach known as the Southern Strategy. This approach aimed to capitalize on the discontent among white Southern voters with the Democratic Party's stance on civil rights. Republican politicians actively courted disaffected white voters by adopting more conservative positions and appealing to their concerns, including opposition to racial integration. As a result, many white Southern voters gradually shifted their loyalty from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party. This political realignment had lasting effects on subsequent elections. The Republican Party gained increased support in the South, while the Democratic Party's dominance in the region waned.

The changes in party affiliation brought about by the Civil Rights Movement and the subsequent Southern Strategy reshaped the political landscape and electoral dynamics in the United States. It highlighted the significance of racial issues in shaping voter preferences and contributed to the ongoing evolution of party politics. African American voters played a significant role in the 1960 election, and John F. Kennedy, the Democratic nominee, attempted to win their support. This enabled him to win crucial states. Like Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Kennedy's successor, zealously promoted civil rights and successfully fought for the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Johnson's presidential campaign in 1964 focused heavily on his support for civil rights legislation, which propelled him to a landslide victory.

4.2. Economic Factors

Economic factors likewise influence election results at that time. The oil crisis and stagflation, defined as high inflation and slow economic development, were two problems the US dealt with in the 1970s. During this time, these economic difficulties had a considerable impact on voter perceptions and the outcome of elections.

The oil crisis and stagflation overtook other voter concerns. These economic difficulties were more apparent as a result of the increased cost of living, together with gasoline shortages and lengthy queues at the pump during the oil crisis. Candidates who adequately addressed these issues and offered workable answers fared better in the polls. The main issues that voters were concerned about were reducing energy dependence, fostering economic development, and battling inflation. Candidates were therefore more likely to win votes if they put forward convincing economic ideas, such as fiscal discipline, monetary policy, and energy diversification.

Economic difficulties of the 1970s disturbed traditional political allegiances and voting patterns. Due to the financial challenges they faced, voters grew increasingly curious about other party affiliations. During this time, support for third-party politicians and movements that presented unconventional policy solutions and pledged to confront economic difficulties head-on surged. As a result, incumbent presidents faced a particularly difficult situation. Their capacity to respond to the oil crisis and stagflation successfully became crucial variables affecting their political prospects. Voters assessed how incumbents handled the economy and the remedies they offered, and these assessments had a significant impact on their choice of candidate.

Ronald Reagan's victory in 1980 signaled a substantial turn toward conservative economic principles and had a considerable influence on the results of the Electoral College as well as the following rise of the Republican Party. By combining tax cuts, deregulation, and a focus on supply-side economics, Reaganomics, as his economic policies became known, sought to accelerate economic development.

Reagan's economic message connected with a sizable section of the public, winning over many Americans who had lost hope in the economy. When he ran for president in 1980 and 1984, Reagan's pledges of lower taxes, less government regulation, and the support of free-market ideals helped him win both the popular vote and the Electoral College. An era of economic rebirth resulted from the application of Reagan's programs. Reaganomics aimed to shrink the size and influence of the federal government while promoting private-sector investment. Because of this, the American economy saw lower inflation and faster GDP growth. The Reaganomics-related economic successes increased support for Reagan and the Republican Party.

Reagan's election successes and the upbeat economic environment revitalized the Republican Party, which cemented its status as a significant player in American politics. As its reach grew outside its traditional base, the Republican Party attracted more conservative-leaning people. The American

economy and political climate were significantly impacted by Reagan's economic policies, notably his tax cuts and deregulation initiatives. For years to come, these measures affected the direction of discussions about economic policy and had an impact on future presidential elections and political strategy. The Republican Party's platform and policies have been influenced by supply-side economics and conservative fiscal ideas since the inception of Reaganomics.

International Affairs

At the height of the Cold War, the dynamics of the international struggle between the US and the Soviet Union had a considerable impact on American foreign policy. The ramifications affected voting and electoral methods. Important events in international relations, including the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Soviet Union's détente, left a lasting impression on American politics.

Wide-ranging effects resulted from the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, a tense standoff between the US and the USSR over the deployment of nuclear weapons in Cuba. The crisis brought the Cold War to the fore of people's minds and heightened worries about future nuclear conflict. The increased level of international tension presented a challenge for presidential contenders. They needed to showcase their crisis management skills. In the end, the stances and approaches to the Cuban Missile Crisis that political contenders took impacted the ways voters viewed them, ultimately shaping election results. Détente describes a time in the 1970s when tensions between the US and the USSR were reduced and ties between the two countries were improved. This change in foreign policy had an impact on voter intentions and electoral plans. Candidates for president had to strike a careful balance between promoting peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union and upholding a resolute opposition to communism. The level of support a politician received from voters was influenced by how well they handled these tricky diplomatic situations.

The United States and the Soviet Union engaged in a fierce nuclear weapons race during the Cold War. Election strategy and voter concerns heavily included nuclear weapons limitation negotiations and treaties, such as the Strategic Weapons Limitation Talks (SALT). Voters worried about nuclear proliferation, and the stances that politicians took toward disarmament and build up directly affected the possibility of nuclear confrontation. During the Cold War, political strategies and voter decisions were heavily influenced by views of a candidate's power and capacity to protect national security. Candidates frequently aimed to portray a resolute position against the Soviet Union and show that they were dedicated to defending American interests. Voters carefully considered a candidate's background in international affairs, views on defense expenditure, and aptitude for negotiating the challenges of the Cold War. Here are some examples of candidates catching the trend of international affairs and facilitating their election through proper campaigning.

John F. Kennedy: John F. Kennedy ran for president in 1960 on a platform of strength in opposition to the Soviet Union. He highlighted the need for a strong military and presented himself as a leader capable of handling the difficulties posed by the Cold War. Kennedy demonstrated his fortitude and leadership in the face of a potential nuclear conflict by addressing the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, during which he held steady against the Soviet Union's plan to place nuclear weapons in Cuba.

Richard Nixon: When he ran for president in 1968 and 1972, Richard Nixon portrayed himself as a seasoned diplomat and a forceful negotiator. He committed to pursuing a détente strategy with the Soviet Union to lower tensions and foster collaboration. Nixon demonstrated his capacity for Cold War strategic diplomacy during his visit to China in 1972, which was vital in restoring diplomatic ties between the two nations.

Ronald Reagan: Ronald Reagan positioned himself as a fierce opponent of Soviet communism in his campaigns for president in 1980 and 1984. To confront the Soviet threat, he argued for a robust defense and a greater military budget. During the closing years of the Cold War, Reagan's aggressive language against the Soviet Union, especially his infamous "tear down this wall" address in Berlin, showed his dedication to battling communism and advancing American interests.

In order to address Cold War concerns and portray strength in defending national security, politicians deliberately positioned themselves and adjusted their campaigns, as shown in the instances above. Voters made their choices by taking into account the candidates' backgrounds, policies, and perceived ability to manage the issues of the time.

Between 1964 and 1988, considerable historical developments occurred locally and internationally, many of which had a considerable influence on the results of the presidential elections. The Cold War dynamics, the Civil Rights Movement, economic hardships, and the emergence of Reaganomics all had a significant impact. These occurrences impacted voting trends, party realignment, and candidate strategies, illuminating the dynamic link between significant historical shifts and the American electoral system.

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