

To what extent can reagan's electoral victory in 1980 be put down to the rise of ...

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1980's America saw a boom in a new group of hard-line Christians; known as the 'new right', a powerful group of republican evangelicals set on restoring the American morals of old (with somewhat a very archaic mindset for example noequalityfor homosexuals etc. ) This group took a very strong liking to Reagan and his strong Christian moral conservatism and thus earned him millions of votes in the election of 1980. Was Reagan's victory largely down to the rise of the new right? Or were there other more prominent factors, which lead to Reagan's victory?

In 1980s America TV could be used as a powerful political tool, 67% of American's received 100% of all there news from the television, this clearly showing if televised speeches, debate and propaganda were used correctly it could be a direct, simple and powerful method to connect with the people- winning over the votes of millions of American's. Reagan executed all his televised appearances like a professional (he was an ex-Hollywood 'star' which definitely helped immensely,) 'he could read an autocue like a professional'.

Also his personal traits were key - portraying himself as a 'physically attractive and charming man who was gracious and polite' this again helped him as all those were key and made Reagan a much more likeable person. Furthermore, Reagan also worked with general electric in the 60's where he was in charge of the TV shows; he also gained valuable electioneering skills during the job, as he had to meet thousands of people daily, also giving unrehearsed speeches to hundreds.

The job handed him with a perfect chance to groom his campaigning skills to a respectable audience of 700, 000, which was tiny compared to the people of America but still a good start, where he learnt how to be a people person and how to work the TV. In contrast to this his main opponent - incumbent president, Jimmy Carter was quite the opposite to the charming, attractive Reagan. He delivered his 'crisis of confidence' speech where he found it easy to find problems but couldn't seem to deliver any solutions.

This again showed Reagan's superiority in these areas where he delivered short and direct targets such as reviving American strength in the world once again. This again gained him popularity as it gave the people something to look forward to and it showed he meant business unlike the passive carter. Carter, having completed one term in power had done next to nothing useful, he became know as a man who would deal with problems when they came rather than trying to predict them and stop them from happening- not what you want for the worlds most powerful man.

During his presidency he grew more foolish and weak in the eys of America. Almost nothing positive happened during his presidency; America's di?? tente with the USSR ended, there was an energy crisis. Also hisfailureof a brother somewhat cast negativity towards him making him look more foolish and weak. His 'crisis of confidence' speech was completely crazy he informed America of its problems including a lack ofleadership- 'now all we need is leadership' a mildly retarded thing to say, as he was 'the' leader of America, and still didn't give any solutions to the problems he presented.

It was clear that nothing had changed for the good from Nixon's presidency. The economy was still stuck in the stagflation caused by Nixon, Carter had done nothing but worsen it. Reagan used Carter's 'nothing' presidency where almost nothing was done, to his advantage- he promised to renew prosperity by restoring the economy through 'reaganomics' where there would be lower taxes and less regulation - curing the stagflation. No one knew it would work but it was a lot more than Carter offered.

Reagan also had vast amount of political training from being an active trade unionist where he established himself as a strong anti-communist (again extremely popular with the lingering cold war and also very popular with the new right who wanted a return of the traditional morals) and also the job was said to help 'gain an apprenticeship in negotiating, to develop an instinct for when to 'hang-tough' and when to cut a deal' by a political analyst- which would clearly help him become a successful president.

He was also the governor of California from 1967-75, which was a massive success, and he managed to make California the seventh richest 'country' in the world- showing he knew how to work economics, which is what America vitally needed! He also had the experience of running for president as he had attempted on two other occasions. All this political experience would be priceless for his campaign.

Reagan was also extremely conservative which also gained him lots of votes- as he stood for mostly traditional values such as; no abortion, pornography, drugs, and equality for homosexuals. He was also a strong evangelical Christian, which initially gained him the support of the new right and with it

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groups such as the 'moral majority' as they had the backing from Reagan and they believed he was going to bring American morals back.

He also gained support from the Neo conservative's traditionalists and anti feminists, also vitally he managed to get the support of the born again Christians even though carter tried his hardest to gain there support being a born again Christian too, Reagan managed to do so with his conservative ideology. The new right was essential for his campaign, as Reagan had such radical ideas many would have seen him as crazy and never given him a chance - comparing him to the extremist Barry Goldwater. The new right rather embraced his ideas as they fitted in well with what they wanted.

Reagan was extremely lucky that this spark in Christianity coincided with this electoral campaign as if he failed it would most probably be the end of him as he was aging and many were already hesitant to elect such an old man. In conclusion, ii feel it is very clear that the rise of the new right played a very significant role in Reagan's ascendancy to power, and without a doubt without this support he probably couldn't win as it allowed him to create a base of support from which he could build around and add onto.

However, I believethat there were other more influencing factors which lead to his presidency such as his political ingeniousness particularly offering an intelligent solution to the stagflation suppressing the country, as well as the mans personal characteristics such as his personal charm and talent in front of the TV which allowed him to manipulate millions as they could see it with there own eyes that he was an astute leader.

But, from the election results we see such a narrow win on Reagan's side this even so when millions of democrats didn't even vote, I believe that this shows us that Reagan won largely due to the failures of Carter as even though he was such a useless leader who did next to nothing he still managed to almost win the elections, furthermore he still came so close even with a large percent of his 'party' boycotting the election- showing carter didn't have a very large support base, and if he did have decent opposition Reagan could have lost by a landslide.