

Carter Versus Reagan and the 1980 Presidential Bid



Reagan first hit the national scene in 1964 when he supported Barry Goldwater's campaign, and basically laid out the foundation of his conservative philosophy. By the time he was the one running for President, **Reagan's campaign was founded on 4 key ideas: less government, stronger defense, anti-Communism, and a belief that America could be strong again**⁹.

These simple ideas brought the new and old Right together and proved too strong for a

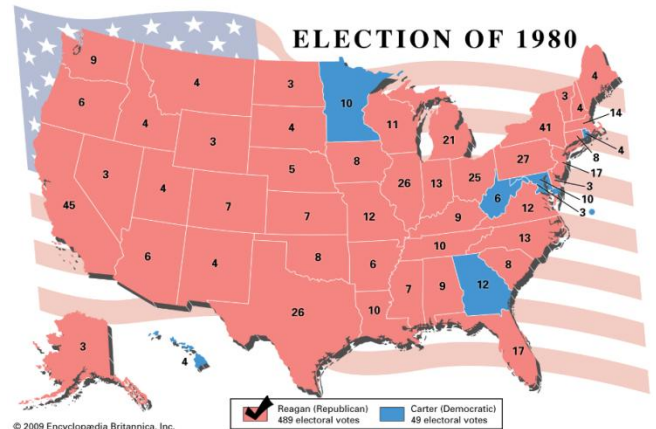
Democratic incumbent¹⁰. While Reagan ran on simple ideas, Carter stayed true to his Christian faith, and was the only president, up to then, whose speeches contained the words "love," "tenderness," and "healing." More important, though, was the straight-forwardness of Reagan's ideology, and his approach to issues in a black and white way, while Carter dove too deeply into the complexity of the challenges facing America and the world⁵.

*"You and I are told we must choose between a left or right, but I suggest there is no such thing as left or right. There is only up or down. Up to man's age-old dream - the maximum of individual's freedom consistent with order or down to the ant heap of totalitarianism. Regardless of their sincerity, their humanitarian motive, those who would sacrifice freedom for security have embarked on this downward path." - Ronald Reagan, 1964*⁹



On November 4, 1980, at 9:01pm ET, Carter called Reagan to congratulate him on a victory. At 10:31pm ET, Carter publicly conceded the election, making it the earliest concession since 1904. Although Reagan is credited with having a "decisive" victory, the 1980 election had the lowest voter turnout since 1948, with only 52.4% of registered voters participating. Nonetheless,

the American paradigm had shifted, and Reagan's new conservatism was ascending⁵.



5. *The Unfinished Presidency* by Douglas Brinkley

9."Ronald Reagan and the Conservative Movement- A Revolution? A Reaction? A Reform?" By R. T. Johnson for *The History Rant*

10. "Conservatism and the Rise of Ronald Reagan" by the US State Department