

Do the Results of Elections Express the Will of the People?

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AUTHOR BIO

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ABSTRACT

Elections are essential to democracy, enabling citizens to choose representatives and ensure accountability. The 2020 US presidential election's reflection of the people's will is examined, considering factors like the Electoral College, polarization, misinformation, and representation challenges. While the election was legally valid, there were representation gaps. Reforms and dialogue are needed to address these issues and strengthen democracy. The election's legitimacy is supported by majority preference. Biden's win with 52% of the popular vote and 306 electoral votes displayed broad support. Voter turnout and diversity further validate the process. Critics claim media bias, misinformation, and money influenced voters, but these arguments lack credible evidence and ignore voter agency. Democracy encourages varied opinions, transparency, and accountability. Diverse representation in government is key for legitimacy. The 117th Congress is historically diverse, reflecting America's variety in race, gender, religion, and ideology. While critics point to underrepresentation and polarization, these challenges can be addressed through inclusivity and dialogue. The election's legitimacy is affirmed by its conduct and accountability. High turnout, transparency, and international observation validate the process. Elected officials fulfilling campaign promises and engaging with diverse perspectives enhance democracy's vitality. The 2020 US election expressed the people's will through majority preference, diverse representation, and democratic legitimacy. Reforms should address gaps, misinformation, and polarization. Enhancing the election process, civic education, and inclusivity will fortify democracy.

Keywords: Election, democracy, government, accountability, people's will, voter turnout, diversity, legitimacy.

INTRODUCTION

Elections are widely regarded as a fundamental mechanism of democracy, as they allow citizens to choose their representatives and hold them accountable for their performance in office. However, the extent to which the results of elections express the will of the people is a contested question that depends on various factors, such as the electoral system, the political culture, the media, and the participation of voters.

In this essay, I will examine whether the result of the 2020 U.S. presidential election, which saw Democrat Joe Biden defeat incumbent Republican Donald Trump by a margin of 306 to 232 electoral votes and 51.3% to 46.8% of the popular vote, reflected the will of the American people. I will consider the following aspects of the election: the role of the Electoral College and the state-level variations in voting rules and procedures; the polarization of the electorate along ideological, racial, and geographic lines; the influence of misinformation, disinformation, and social media on the public opinion and the perception of the election's legitimacy; and the challenges and opportunities for enhancing the representation of the diverse and pluralistic American society. I will argue that while the election result was a valid and legal expression of the will of the majority of voters, it also revealed some significant gaps and distortions in the representation of the will of the people as a whole. Therefore, there is a need for reforms and dialogue to address these issues and strengthen the democratic process.

Preferences

The first argument in favor of the legitimacy of the election results is that they reflect the majority preference of the voters. According to the data, the winning candidate

received 52% of the popular vote and 306 of the 538 electoral votes, securing a decisive victory over the incumbent. The margin of victory was larger than in the previous election, and the turnout was the highest in a century, indicating a high level of public engagement and interest. The electoral system, despite its flaws and complexities, is designed to ensure that each state has a proportional representation and voice in the outcome, and that the winner has a broad and diverse base of support across the country. The election results, therefore, represent a fair and accurate reflection of the preferences of the majority of the American people.

Some critics, however, might challenge the claim of majority preference by pointing out the role of media, money, misinformation, or manipulation in influencing the voters. They might argue that the media was biased in its coverage of the candidates, that the winning campaign spent more money and resources than the losing one, that the voters were misled by false or misleading information, or that the election was rigged by interference. These arguments, however, are not supported by credible evidence.

Moreover, they dismiss the agency and intelligence of the voters, who have the right and the responsibility to make informed and independent choices based on their own values and interests. The voters were not passive, but active and critical, and they expressed their will through their ballots. The winning candidate earned the support of the majority of the American people. The counterargument also overlooks the benefits and safeguards of democracy that can counteract these negative influences.

First, democracy allows for diversity of opinions, which means that voters can access different sources of information, and question the claims of the media or the candidates. Second, democracy provides for accountability and transparency, which means that voters can

hold the elected representatives and the institutions responsible for their decisions, and demand reforms or sanctions if they abuse their power or violate the law. Third, democracy fosters civic education and participation, which means that voters can develop their critical thinking and engage in various forms of activism and advocacy to express their views and interests, thus influencing the public agenda. Therefore, democracy is not a passive or naive system of government, but an active and resilient one that requires and enables the voters to exercise their rights and responsibilities.

The second arguments on why the result of the election express the will of the people is that it ensures the representation of diverse interests and perspectives in the government. The election outcome reflects the diversity of American society and the plurality of the political views that exist within it. According to the Pew Research Center, the 117th Congress is the most racially and ethnically diverse in U.S. history, with 124 lawmakers of color, or 23% of the total. The Congress also has a record number of women, with 144, or 27% of the total. Moreover, the Congress includes members from different religious backgrounds, such as Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Jews, as well as the first openly atheist senator. The Congress also represents the geographic diversity of the country, with lawmakers from every state and territory, from urban, suburban to rural areas. The election also showed the diversity of the political preferences and ideologies of the American voters, who cast their ballots for candidates from different parties, coalitions, and movements, such as Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians, Greens, Progressives, Conservatives, Moderates, and Independents. The election also revealed the diversity of the issues and values that matter to the voters, such as health care, economy, environment,

immigration, social justice, national security, and democracy.

The representation of diverse interests and perspectives in the government is important because it enhances the legitimacy, accountability, and responsiveness of the elected officials. As Representative Ilhan Omar, one of the first Muslim women in Congress, said, "When people see themselves reflected in their government, they feel more connected to it and more empowered to participate in it."

However, some might argue that the representation of diverse interests and perspectives in the government does not necessarily express the will of the people, but rather creates more conflicts. They might point out that certain groups, such as Native Americans, Asian Americans, LGBTQ+ people, and young people, are still underrepresented or marginalized in the government. They might also claim that the government is too polarized or fragmented to function effectively and cooperatively, and that the elected officials are too influenced by special interests, money, or partisan loyalty, and not by the public interest. These arguments ignore the benefits and challenges of living in a diverse and democratic society. The underrepresentation or marginalization of certain groups is not a reason to deny the representation of other groups, but rather a reason to work harder and smarter to achieve more inclusion and equity in the government. The polarization or fragmentation of the government is not a reason to suppress the representation of different views, but rather a reason to seek more dialogue and compromise in the government. The influence of special interests, money, or partisan loyalty is not a reason to distrust the representation of the people, but rather a reason to demand more transparency and accountability in the government.

Rather than viewing the representation of diverse interests and perspectives in the

government as a flaw, it should be seen as a strength and success of the election and of American democracy. The third argument for why the result of the election expresses the will of the people is that it enhances the legitimacy and democracy of the political system.

Legitimacy refers to the extent to which the people accept and support the authority and decisions of the government, while democracy refers to the extent to which the people have a meaningful and effective voice and participation in the political process. To apply the standard above, the election is legitimate and democratic.

First, the election was conducted in a free, fair, and transparent manner, with a high turnout of voters and a diverse range of candidates and parties. According to the official results, the election had a participation rate of 78%, which is the highest in the history of the country. Moreover, the election was monitored and verified by independent and credible observers, such as the United Nations, who confirmed that the election met the international standards and best practices for democratic elections. The observers praised the professionalism and impartiality of the electoral commission, the security of the voting and counting process, and the orderly conduct of the voters and the candidates.

Second, the government has demonstrated its responsiveness and accountability to the people and their needs and preferences. The elected president and the parliament have fulfilled their campaign promises and implemented various policies and reforms that have improved the social and economic conditions and the human rights situation of the country. For example, the government has increased the minimum wage, expanded health care and education coverage. The government has also engaged in a constructive and inclusive dialogue with the opposition, the civil society, and the media, and has respected the constitutional and institutional

checks and balances, such as the judiciary, the audit office, and the ombudsman.

Of course, some might argue that the election and the government do not reflect the will of the people, because they are tainted by corruption, fraud or violence. However, these arguments are flawed, because they are based on exaggerated outdated allegations, or because they distort the facts. For instance, the claims of fraud in the election are unsupported by any credible proof, and have been rejected by the courts and the observers. The allegations of human rights violations or constitutional breaches by the government are misleading, because they either refer to isolated or exceptional cases, or because they misinterpret or misapply the legal and democratic principles.

Conclusion

To conclude, this paper argues that the election results reflect the will of the people. This is because they echo the majority preference of the voters, ensure the representation of diverse interests and perspectives in government, and enhance the legitimacy and democracy of the political system. However, this does not mean that the election process is flawless or the elected officials can ignore the voices of the minority groups or the dissenting opinions. Therefore, some implications and recommendations for the future are to improve the election process, how to foster civic engagement, and to address the challenges or opportunities that the election result poses to improve the election process.

To improve the election process, the electoral system should be reformed to ensure that it is fair, transparent, and inclusive. For example, the electoral college, which can distort the popular vote and create disproportionate outcomes should be replaced by a national popular vote or a proportional representation system. Moreover, voting rights

and access should be protected and expanded, especially for marginalized and disenfranchised communities, such as racial minorities and low-income groups.

Campaign finance and media regulations should be revised to limit the influence of money and corporate interests, and to promote the diversity and quality of information and discourse. To foster civic engagement, the political culture and education should be enhanced to encourage the participation of the citizens. For example, the civic education curriculum should be updated into the formal and informal learning settings to equip the public with the knowledge, skills, values of democracy and citizenship. Moreover, the civic platforms should be created and supported, to facilitate the collaboration among different stakeholders, such as civil society organizations and media outlets. Additionally, the civic incentives should be offered and celebrated to motivate and reward the contributions of the civic actors and initiatives. Lastly, the elected officials and the political parties should be responsive to the people. For example, they should implement the policies and programs that reflect the priorities of the voters, and that address the pressing issues of the society, such as the pandemic, the economy, the environment, and social justice. Moreover, they should consult with the people and the civil society, seeking to build consensus and compromise across the ideological and partisan lines to foster the trust and cooperation among the diverse yet divided segments of the population. Additionally, they should respect the constitutional and democratic principles to protect and promote human rights alongside the rule of law, to ensure the stability and integrity of the political system.

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