

PLSC 270

Fall 2018

Dr. Datta

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## Swing States: Trade, Media, and the Electoral College

### Research Question:

What influence do swing states have during elections?

### Key Terms Defined (if need be)

**Trade Theory:** analyzes international trade and welfare, associated with Adam Smith's laissez-faire, free market economic system

**Swing State:** commonly known as a purple state, refers to a state which could be won by one of the majority parties, Democratic or Republican and has similar levels of support among voters, creating competitive elections.

**Political Efficacy:** Citizens' trust in government and how they can influence politics, correlated with social life and health of civic society

**Electoral College:** body of electors chosen by group of citizens every four years for the presidential election, split in terms of population per state

### *Key Citations (1 or 2, if need be)*

Not needed

### First School of Thought

Brief Name:

Political Interests

### *Basic Argument/Answer to Research Question (250 to 300 words):*

Purple swing states lead to tough victories as indicated in bottom line and survey results. Some examples were that Hillary Clinton's home state of Arkansas could change election behavior. "The only other difference seen in the Obama vs. Clinton candidates' general-election performances is in the seven safe (and mostly Southern) Republican states won by Clinton in the primaries." Clinton's swing state advantage being that her states represent more electoral votes than Obamas, additionally, she performs extraordinarily well in red states (Saad 2008). Through the analysis of data in high schools, the increased youth political engagement and interest in one swing state demonstrated "the implications for education in democratic societies". Advertisements are more common in swing states, where voters have greater influence over

outcome due to Electoral College system (Levy et al. 2016). While Democrats have made gains in the 2018 Midterms, the question still remains have state legislatures been changed enough to allow for redistricting and the end of gerrymandering. Sean Illing bring to light that House of Representative do not redraw maps in the 2020 census, governors and state representative do (2018). The state legislature elections this month have proven to be more key to political interest than federal elections. Only “successive generational waves” will create long term political fairness. Democrats have gained ground, but most continue to do succeed for the next decade. “Trump’s unpopularity is likely to give state-level Democrats a big boost”, but American federalism is skeptical in nature. While state governments are meant to be closer to citizens, people often rank state officials in comparison to the viewpoints of Trump or other official without regard to their local and state level achievements (Yglesias 2018).

### *Key Citations (3 to 5)*

Illing, Sean. 2018. “What the 2018 Midterms Mean for the Democrats’ Gerrymandering Dilemma.” *Vox Media*, November 7. <https://www.vox.com/midterm-elections/2018/11/7/18071560/2018-midterm-elections-democrats-gerrymandering> (November 8, 2018).

Levy, Brett L M, Benjamin G Solomon, and Lauren Collet-Gildard. 2016. “Fostering Political Interest Among Youth During the 2012 Presidential Election: Instructional Opportunities and Challenges in a Swing State.” *Educational Researcher* 45(9): 483–95.

Saad, Lydia. 2008. “Hillary Clinton’s Swing-State Advantage.” *Gallup Poll Briefing*, May 28. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/107539/hillary-clintons-swingstate-advantage.aspx> (October 30, 2018).

Yglesias, Matthew. 2018. “Midterms 2018: The Battle for State Legislatures.” *Vox Media*, September 19. <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/9/19/17879100/midterms-2018-state-legislatures-battle-weeds> (November 1, 2018).

## **Second School of Thought**

### **Brief Name:**

Voter Ideology and the Electoral College

### *Basic Argument/Answer to Research Question (250 to 300 words):*

Are swing voters or swing states the real problem in affecting legislatures voting? Electoral change is possible when voters make decisions based off the hierarchical model and campaign motivation and incentives. Democrats and Republicans attempt to sway voters by implementing

policies to their liking essentially ‘swinging’ an individual in a direction. A claim can be made that this argument is similar to swing states, but on a much smaller scale (Hill 2017, 131-133). Electoral college systems create the necessity for battleground strategies with each state having one elector per member of House of Representative and two for Senators, favoring more populous states and those with more liberal and conservative views (Norpoth 2017, 1-3). The Winner-Take-All system used in every state except for Maine and Nebraska has created political tension, since it allows small swing states to have as much as an effect as large populous ones (Duquette 2017, 47). Presidential hopefuls must now flock to rural America to garner more electoral votes from states like Wisconsin, Iowa, and New Mexico which combined are enough votes of one populous state (Zeleny 2004, 1). These rural states tend to consist of voters with lower political engagement, therefore making it easier to convince them to change their ideological perspectives. United States voter ideology has also changed overtime, ever since separation from England, determined that our government “derive it’s powers from the consent of the governed” (LaVigne 2014, 508). In the 1800s, the fourteenth and fifteenth amendment of the United States Constitution conferred citizens and prohibited the federal government from denying citizens the right to vote based off of discriminatory factors. Not until the 1965 Voting Rights Act established by President Johnson would voter ideology and Democratic and Republican party ideologies start to distinguish each other and preempt the need for voting law (2014, 512).

### *Key Citations (3 to 5)*

Duquette, Christopher M, Franklin G Mixon Jr., and Richard J B T - Atlantic Economic Journal Cebula. 2017. “Swing States, the Winner-Take-All Electoral College, and Fiscal Federalism.” 45(1): 45-57.

Hill, Seth J. 2017. “Changing Votes or Changing Voters? How Candidates and Election Context Swing Voters and Mobilize the Base.” *Electoral Studies* 48: 131–48.

LaVigne, Michael. 2014. “Swing State Rulings on Restrictive Voting Laws Highlight the Need for Comprehensive Electoral Reform Casenotes and Comments.” *University of Colorado Law Review* 85: 505–36.

Norpoth, Helmut. 2017. “Presidential Swing States: Why Only Ten Matter.” *Perspectives on Politics* 15(4): 1156–57.

Zeleny, Jeff. 2004. “Presidential Campaign Trails Heavily Skewed toward Rural America, Swing States.” *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News*: 1.

## Third School of Thought

### Brief Name:

Trade, Income, and Industry

### *Basic Argument/Answer to Research Question (250 to 300 words):*

The United States surplus of trade including economic activity such as imports and exports, job security, and manufacturing often prove to be major voting factors that affect swing states specifically those with heavy industry ties and provide political capital for the Electoral College. Trade policy is analyzed in the Electoral College in presence of swing votes, further addressing electoral incentive. As Jensen states, “job insecurity from import competition in manufacturing diminishes political support for incumbents” (2017, 423). Circumstances under which incumbent politicians have incentive to build reputation for protectionism, therefore improving their re-election probability through trade protection policy by conducting empirical tests (Muûls 2013). Political schizophrenia of every changing between Republican and Democrat. Demography of Virginia has changed because most residents are transplants, liberal at that. The only Southern republicans that exist are the few tobacco and coal people from the Western rural ends of the state, which are “sparsely populated with low voter turnout”. The diversity of the people and the economy has kept Virginia at low unemployment rate, contributed to the tech industry, and allowed for various immigrants to settle. Virginia citizens favor Republicans attitudes toward the business climate but favor the socially moderate feeling of the Democrats. (“The Incomer Effect” 2012).

### *Key Citations (3 to 5)*

Jensen, J Bradford, Dennis P Quinn, and Stephen Weymouth. 2017. “Winners and Losers in International Trade: The Effects on US Presidential Voting.” *International Organization* 71(3): 423–57.

Muûls, Mirabelle, and Dimitra Petropoulou. 2013. “A Swing State Theory of Trade Protection in the Electoral College.” *The Canadian Journal of Economics* 46(2): 705–24.

“The Incomer Effect.” 2012. *The Economist*, September 29. <https://www.economist.com/united-states/2012/09/29/the-incomer-effect> (October 18, 2018).

## Fourth School of Thought

### Brief Name:

Media Institutions

### *Basic Argument/Answer to Research Question (250 to 300 words):*

Social Media Content is misinformed, and specifically polarized results were higher in swing states which is a strategical maneuver. This can be proven using Twitter surveys, shared usage, and pin pointing specific examples from Russia, WikiLeaks, and Junk News Sources “Many of the swing states getting highly concentrated doses of polarizing content were also among those with large numbers of votes in the Electoral College”; this content also known as fake news represents the extremism to persuade voters by appealing to their emotions over the information by news outlets (Howard 2018). Local media and online presence have higher political efficiency. First-time voters have given more attention to internet media, while established voters rely of TV presence. (Ha 2013, 212). Efficacy should be divided by external and internal concepts. Internal political efficacy should be categorized as a participatory democracy dealing with individuals’ feelings. External political efficacy refers to mobilization of support, associated with the government’s responsiveness. (206). Media can be compared to efficacy, since involvement in public affairs promotes political expression. Furthermore, survey shows that an increase in mobile technology and social media over hard paper news formats leads to higher positive political efficacy (208-10). In terms of efficacy, there is also geographical and demographic factors to consider. For example, the Mountain Mid-West political rise continues to go unreported leading to “superficial understanding” of changes in the area (Teixeira 2012, 15). This understanding can be clarified by voting patterns and “delineating our regions of analysis and discussing population growth patterns for the state as whole and for each region”, focusing on minorities, college graduates, working-class, and seniors (2012, 11-2).

### *Key Citations (3 to 5)*

Ha, Louisa S et al. 2013. “Political Efficacy and the Use of Local and National News Media Among Undecided Voters in a Swing State: A Study of General Population Voters and First-Time College Student Voters.” *Electronic News* 7(4): 204–22.

Howard, Philip N, Bence Kollanyi, Samantha Bradshaw, and Lisa-Maria Neudert. 2018. “Social Media, News and Political Information during the US Election: Was Polarizing Content Concentrated in Swing States?” *COMPROM*.

Teixeira, Ruy A., ed. 2012. *America’s New Swing Region: Changing Politics and Demographics in the Mountain West*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.