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PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF THE 1968 WALLACE VOTE IN THE SOUTHEAST

*Stephen S. Birdsall**

During the past century, national elections in the United States have rarely included a significant showing by a third party. Political parties other than the Republican and the Democratic have usually suffered from limited constituencies, either regionally or in terms of issues. An extremely interesting phenomenon, therefore, was the presence of a "third" party in 1968. Before the Fall elections, it was believed to have had considerable appeal across the country. George Wallace's American Independent Party (or occasionally, American Party or Independent Party) was frequently discussed as having the best opportunity since Theodore Roosevelt's efforts in 1912 of upsetting the political plans of the two larger parties.

The general results of the 1968 Presidential Election are known. Although receiving the electoral support of nearly 10 million voters, Wallace polled over half of this total in eleven Southern states. Furthermore, the American Independent Party carried only five states, all in the Southeast: Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. The 1968 Wallace-for-President effort, therefore, has some appearances of the limited regional appeal typical of third-party activities in Presidential politics. (1)

Less clear than the general results are the characteristics and spatial pattern of elector support. This paper reports briefly upon preliminary research which deals with voter characteristics and the distribution of voter support for George Wallace in 1968. Data have been analyzed by statistical methods for eight states in the Southeast: North and South Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Although Wallace received many votes in Arkansas, Virginia, Texas, and Kentucky, among other states, data for one of the variables considered important to the analysis were not available for these states. (2) Visual examination of the election results is extended to include Virginia and Arkansas.

ORGANIZATION AND LIMITATIONS. The analyses presented here have been divided into three sections. First, the county-to-county distribution of Wallace vote is examined. This pattern is the per cent of votes received by Wallace from the total number cast in each county. Second, an attempt is made to identify some of the significant characteristics of Wallace supporters. This attempt is made through statistical analysis of county population

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characteristics for the eight-state region. Third, the relationship between degree of support and the population providing this support is studied. As location is taken to be a significant aspect of this relationship, the purpose of this last set of analyses is to determine whether or not there is significant regional variation in the relationship between support for Wallace and characteristics of the population giving it. More loosely, is the appeal of the American Independent Party interpreted differently by voters in one portion of the Southeast than by voters elsewhere in the region? Or again, is the Southeast homogeneous in the interpretation of the appeal from a largely regional candidate? The third portion of this paper, therefore, is a combination of the analyses of the first two sections.

There are numerous difficulties attending the analyses. As with any study using general population characteristics and voting returns, it is impossible to determine the character of the non-voting population. It should also be made clear that the use of grouped (in this case, county) data precludes the assignment of motive or detailed characteristics to any member of the group. Therefore, although conclusions can be stated in terms of specific bases for voter support, individuals cannot be characterized with these results. (3) Additional problems are raised by the use of voter registration records. For example, some counties have more registered voters than eligible voters; deceased and departed registrants might not have been purged from the rolls. More rigor is lost by the necessity of examining 1968 election returns in light of 1960 population characteristics. In spite of these and other problems, the conclusions reached are believed valid as indicators of the general relation between the phenomena studied as well as the direction for further research.

THE PATTERN OF SUPPORT. The spatial pattern of voter support for George Wallace contains several items of interest (Fig. 1). (4) As had been expected, the highest proportion of county support was given Wallace in Alabama and much of eastern Mississippi. As distance from Alabama increases, there appears to be a gradual, mixed decline in the level of support. Louisiana, northern Florida, and Georgia provided strong support (mostly over 40 per cent of the county vote), but this is still somewhat below the large areas of over 60 per cent received in the Alabama and Mississippi "core" region. At greater distance from Alabama, in southern Florida, the Carolinas, Virginia, Tennessee, and Arkansas, the proportion of votes received by Wallace drops to under 40 per cent, and in many counties to under 20 per cent. At the same time, there are significant sections of this "peripheral" Southeast which gave between 40 per cent and 60 per cent of their votes to the American Independent Party.

Perhaps of greater interest than the rather broad "friends-and-neighbors" pattern of support for Wallace (5) is 1) the importance of state boundaries upon this level of support, and 2) the striking similarity between the distribution of votes received by Wallace and the patterns of other phenomena.

By far the most impressive state boundary effect visible on Figure 1 is that between Tennessee and the states to its south. Whether passing from Mississippi, Alabama, or Georgia into Tennessee, there is a drop of about

Figure 1

20 per cent in the level of voter support for Wallace. This difference is remarkably consistent along Tennessee's southern boundary. The decline could be a function of information level or type (with Tennessee voters subjected to different quantities and sources of campaign propaganda), a function of home-state allegiance (leading voters in usually-Republican northern Alabama to cast their ballots for Wallace), or a function of a very different set of attitudes among the Tennessee population.

Several other state boundaries appear to have had the effect of dividing varying levels of support for Wallace. Although less clear than the Alabama-Tennessee boundary, the state line between Alabama and much of Georgia also separates distinct levels of Wallace vote. Georgia has some appearance of being a transition state with respect to 1968 Wallace strength because its boundary with South Carolina is also rather distinct. It is possible that the level of support for the American Independent Party was low in South Carolina (generally under 40 per cent) and distinct from that in Georgia because of the strong pro-Nixon arguments put forth during the campaign by South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond. It is equally possible that the steep rise in Wallace strength across the Georgia boundary with South Carolina is an indication of the decline in the Senator's influence outside his own state, at least relative to Wallace's influence with the voters. It should be mentioned that these state boundary effects, if indeed they are the effect of something, are not cartographic illusions. The apparent drop in percentage of votes to Wallace across the Louisiana-Arkansas boundary is such an "illusion" in that it is partly a function of the classes used in the construction of Figure 1. There is a decline in Wallace strength southeast-to-northwest in Arkansas, but it is not coincidental with the state line as are those discussed above.

The recognition of non-political patterns on Figure 1 provides some insight into the second task of this paper, i.e., the identification of phenomena correlated with variations in the Wallace vote. One of the more easily recognized patterns is the lower level of Wallace vote given by many of the counties with large cities. Arlington and Richmond are visible in Virginia, Charlotte can be picked out in North Carolina, and Columbia can be identified as a low Wallace vote area in central South Carolina. Although they do not stand out as clearly, the counties containing Atlanta, Montgomery, Tallahassee, and Jacksonville also provided somewhat lower support for Wallace than their surrounding counties might suggest.

It is clear, however, that a high level of urbanization is not the only explanatory variable for lower proportions of county returns gained by the American Independent Party. Several exceptions to the general "friends-and-neighbors" pattern described above are also visible. Those counties in south-central Alabama which granted their home-state candidate less than 40 per cent of the local vote are counties possessing the highest proportion of the population Negro. Several of these counties were over 75 per cent black in 1960. The large Negro percentages in the Delta region of western Mississippi are also visible in the somewhat lower voter support given to Wallace in 1968. Conversely, in those portions of the Southeast which have never had a large Negro population (i.e., the Appalachian portions of North

Carolina and Tennessee), the populations also gave most of their votes to either Nixon or Humphrey. Southern Florida, similarly, has proportionately fewer Negroes than northern Florida, and it was the northern part of the state that voted overwhelmingly for Wallace. It can be proposed, then, that within those portions of the Southeast where Wallace's electorate strength was greatest, the presence of a high proportion of Negroes resulted in a low Wallace vote. And where Wallace generally received a lower level of voter support in the Southeast, the presence of Negroes in above average numbers resulted in higher-than-expected voting for Wallace (e.g., see eastern North Carolina on Figure 1). This will be pursued more carefully in the next section.

EXPLANATORY CHARACTERISTICS. The identification of significant explanatory variables for patterns as complex as that of the Wallace vote is often difficult. The variables used in this preliminary analysis were chosen in light of the observed pattern of support for the American Independent Party and also with some consideration given to existing stereotypes of the strong Wallace supporter. Although these characteristics were based on diverse subjective impressions, there was sufficient consistency to provide assistance in the choice of variables to be used. It was expected, therefore, that Wallace would receive a smaller proportion of the total vote in those counties containing a large Negro population, in counties with highly urban populations, with populations possessing high median annual incomes and also higher levels of education. In other words, the supporters of George Wallace, especially in the Southeast, were frequently stereotyped as low-income (but not poor), rural or small-town whites who had earned less than a high school education.

It was also believed that the proportion of registered voters who are black would be a better measure of Negro, i.e., assumed anti-Wallace, political strength than would be the proportion of population black. Obviously, much of the Negro population in the region has been placed on voter registration rolls only recently, (6) with many counties still having a wide discrepancy between the percentage of population black and the percentage of registered voters black. In spite of the difficulties of using such data, as discussed above, the proportion of registered voters who are Negro was considered the best available measure of black political strength. (7)

A series of stepwise multivariate correlation and regression analyses were conducted to determine the strength and form of the explanatory relationships hypothesized. The following five independent variables and one dependent variable were used: (8)

Y = percentage of the total vote received by Wallace, 1968, by county

X₁ = percentage of all registered voters who are Negro, 1968, by county

X₂ = percentage of the total county population which was Negro, 1960

X₃ = median number of school years completed by the adult county population, 1960

X₄ = median annual family income, 1960, by county

X₅ = percentage of the county population classified "urban" by the United States Census, 1960.

Two of the independent variables, X_1 and X_2 , are specifically racial in nature, and the remaining three are not. X_1 and X_2 are also not independent, i.e., there could be some interaction in their joint explanation of the dependent variable. Therefore, they were not used together in the same analysis.

The results of the analyses are shown in Table 1. Because of indications from Figure 1 that there were marked differences in Wallace support from state to state, eight analyses were performed, one for each state. Six of the eight analyses had coefficients of multiple correlation greater than 0.73. The proportion of the variation in Y which is "explained" by the independent variables, therefore, exceeds fifty per cent in each of these states. Only for Tennessee and Georgia were R^2 -values below 0.50. Indeed, in both states, less than 30 per cent of the variation in Wallace vote was explained by significant variables. (9)

Before proceeding to the final section of analysis, it should be pointed out here that of the six states with reasonably high coefficients of multiple correlation (over 0.70), only in Florida was one or the other of the racial variables of less than primary significance. That is, one of the racial variables provided the greatest single source of explanation for the Wallace vote in most of the states studied. In three states, Mississippi, Alabama, and North Carolina, this was by far the most important explanatory factor. (Note that the relationship in North Carolina is positive while it is negative in the other two states. This will be discussed later.)

SUPPORT REGIONS. It would be unusual for state boundaries to be totally effective dividing lines between types of support for national political candidates, even those with strong regional alliances. That differences exist between states is clear from the preceding analyses. Education is a significant variable in explaining the pattern of support for Wallace in Florida and Mississippi, but it is not as important in North Carolina and Louisiana. Furthermore, even Florida and Mississippi are different in this regard. The relation between these variables is negative in Florida (i.e., the higher the median school years completed, the lower the percentage of county vote to Wallace), but it is positive in Mississippi. It was expected that differences such as these often extended across state boundaries.

In an attempt to identify distinct regions of support for Wallace which differ in the form of the relationship described by the significant variables, each state was grouped with adjacent states and stepwise analysis was performed independently for each group. Residuals from the obtained regression equations were then obtained and plotted. In this way, it was possible to identify support regions which were not limited by state boundaries. (10) These regions were then gradually grouped, a procedure subjected to three self-imposed constraints. First, it was necessary that the coefficient of multiple determination for each group of counties be greater than those for the states of which they are a part. Second, in no case was the R^2 permitted to drop below an arbitrarily chosen level of 0.50. Third, each region was composed of conterminous counties. It was necessary to make one exception to this last constraint, however, in North Carolina.

TABLE 1

State	Independent variables in order chosen	Simple correlation coefficients	Multiple correlation coefficients	Coefficient of multiple determination
	X_i	r	R	R^2
N.C.	X_2	.7790		
	X_4	-.2439	.7811	.6101
TENN.	X_2	.4744		
	X_5	.0374		
	X_3	.1075	.5309	.2819
S.C.	X_1	-.5924		
	X_3	-.2043	.7415	.5498
GA.	X_4	-.3039		
	X_1	-.2673	.4795	.2299
FLA.	X_3	-.7305		
	X_5	-.6804		
	X_2	.1178		
	X_4	-.5937	.7980	.6368
ALA.	X_1	-.7130		
	X_3	.1045	.7358	.5414
MISS.	X_1	-.8364		
	X_4	.2219		
	X_3	.4472	.8566	.7338
LA.	X_1	-.5431		
	X_5	-.4603		
	X_4	-.2693	.7919	.6271

N.B. All coefficients of multiple correlation are significant at the .01 level.

The regions derived and the form and strength of the relationships between the variables for each are shown in Figure 2 and Table 2. Tennessee, it was found, should be divided into at least two parts when discussing the relation between Wallace support and population characteristics. The form of this relationship in eastern Tennessee was seen to be very similar to that in most of North Carolina. The R^2 for this group indicates that nearly two-thirds of the variation in Y across this region (Region A) can be explained by the linear equation, $Y = 29.706 + 0.501X_1 - 2.281X_2 + 0.003X_4$. Western Tennessee remains less well explained; this *might* be changed with knowledge of X_1 values for the state. (Note, for example, the similarity in the eastern margin of Region H and the eastern margin of Region C.)

TABLE 2

Region	Indep. var. in order chosen	Simple corr. coef.	Multiple corr. coef.	Multiple coef. of deter.	Regression coef.	Regression constant
	X_i	r	R	R^2	b_i	a
A	X_2	.8004			0.501	
	X_4	.0031			0.003	
	X_3	-.0053	.8149	.6641**	-2.281	29.706
B	X_2	.8107			0.368	
	X_3	-.2000			2.420	
	X_4	-.6720	.8967	.8041**	-0.003	22.061
C	X_2	.3848			0.483	
	X_5	-.0336			-0.271	
	X_4	.1319	.5691	.3239**	0.007	25.693
D	X_1	-.5924			-0.592	
	X_3	-.2043	.7415	.5498**	-5.005	91.993
E	X_3	-.2924			-3.947	
	X_1	-.2616	.4180	.1747	-0.254	
F	X_3	-.8229			-9.351	
	X_5	-.7469			-0.185	
	X_4	-.6065	.8649	.7481**	0.006	114.678
G	X_1	-.6237			-0.720	
	X_4	-.1171			-0.005	
	X_5	-.3696			-0.125	
	X_3	.0204	.8562	.7331**	2.072	74.276
H	X_1	-.6576			-0.687	
	X_4	-.1743			-0.005	
	X_3	-.0062			1.805	
	X_5	-.3398	.7801	.6086**	-0.067	83.474
I	X_1	-.4747			-0.677	
	X_4	-.3184	.7183	.5160**	-0.005	84.156
H + I	X_1	-.6298			-0.735	
	X_4	-.1523			-0.007	
	X_3	.0558	.7475	.5588**	2.617	78.468

**significant at the .01 level

WALLACE SUPPORT REGIONS

1968

Figure 2

It was found that by separating Region B from the remainder of North Carolina, thus violating the conterminous constraint, the explanations of both Regions A and B were improved. The very high R^2 for Region B, largely due to a high *positive* correlation between Y and X_2 , gives rise to some speculation. The relation indicates that the larger the percentage of black population in a county, the greater the proportional voter support given to Wallace. Before concluding that he had the support of the Negro population here and in Region A, the relation between population and political strength must be examined again. Within Region B, no county has more than 35 per cent of the registered voters Negro (most are about 25 per cent), while the populations in these counties are in most cases over 35 per cent Negro. Furthermore, the non-contiguous portion of Region A, in northeastern North Carolina, is the area of primary concentration for Negroes in the state. In other words, those areas with a low proportion of the population Negro and those with a high proportion Negro are more alike with regard to the Wallace vote in the state than either is to a group of counties intermediate in the level of Negro population. In light of the other relationships indicated in Table 2, it is possible to postulate that where the conditions of Region B hold, i.e., a large but not majority portion of the population Negro, income and education are more important explanatory variables than elsewhere.

Several other states were divided in the process of regionalizing by form of Wallace support. Southern Florida stands out in sharp distinction to northern Florida. In this respect, at least, Florida is two separate states. Southern Florida, Region F, is also atypical in the Southeast. Of the three independent variables providing significant improvement in the explanation of the pattern of Wallace voting, none are racial. That is, neither racial variable was statistically important enough for inclusion in the analysis. Even without the racial element, nearly three-quarters of the variation in Y was explained. It was also meaningful to separate much of Louisiana and portions of the Mississippi Delta from the remainder of the Southeast. Except for Baton Rouge (which suffers here from the contiguity requirement), none of the larger Louisiana cities and towns are placed in Region H.

Region H is "Wallace Country." This portion of the Southeast, and to a lesser extent Region I, not only gave the American Independent Party candidate an overwhelming proportion of its available votes (see Fig. 1), it also gave these votes from a rather consistent social environment. This is not to say that the region is homogeneous in either social characteristics or support for the former Governor of Alabama. If, however, it is possible to assume that political perceptions and actions are in large part a function of, or better, reflected by, socio-economic characteristics, then it is possible to say that Region H, or the joint region of H and I, is somewhat homogeneous in the relation between Negro registration, income, and education and the pattern of Wallace vote. It is most interesting to note that in both Regions G and H+I, there is a strong inverse relation between the vote for Wallace and the proportion of registered voters Negro. If in fact, "the southern Negro vote is 'issue-oriented,' and race is the issue," (11) then it is clear that the voting black population in this portion of the Southeast views George Wallace's posture on racial issues with considerable disfavor.

Two final comments are in order with respect to Figure 2. South Carolina remains distinct from the rest of the Southeast. An increase in explanation of the pattern of Y does not follow from grouping with either Regions A, E, I, or H. This appears to be further confirmation of a specifically statewide, and probably state-oriented, influence; Senator Thurmond, again, may be the best explanation. Northeastern Georgia remains a region which is not well-explained. Although the relationship described in Table 2 for this region, Region E, is statistically significant at the .01 level, the coefficients of correlation and determination are low. The low degree of explanation for Region E may be a function of factors not included in the analysis, purely local issues, or some combination of these. Indeed, it may well be related to Senator Thurmond's influence. If this region were to go less for Wallace than "expected" from state-wide characteristics (as was the case in fact), then the relation described by the variables could be consistent with neither South Carolina's nor the rest of Georgia's patterns. Whatever the solution to this problem, Georgia contains some of the character of the Wallace South and some of the character of South Carolina.

CONCLUDING REMARKS. The pattern of voter support for George Wallace in 1968 has been analysed. Visual examination of the pattern indicates that Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana voters gave Wallace a very large proportion of their ballots. Southern Georgia and northern Florida can also be included with these states. In general, there appeared to be some relation between distance from the candidate's home state and his influence with the voters. Significant exceptions to this pattern were seen in the lower voter support given Wallace in urban counties and those containing very large percentages of Negro population. In several cases, state boundaries coincided with clear changes in the level of Wallace's voter support. Using multivariate correlation and regression analysis, it was possible to identify several regions distinctly different in their basis of support for Wallace and also the characteristics of the population giving this support. Except for southern Florida, one or the other of the two racial variables used was of primary importance in each region. The relationship was clearly negative in the regions of greatest Wallace electoral strength but more speculative in North Carolina and Tennessee.

The analyses reported in this paper are essentially preliminary ones. Problems such as northern Georgia and western Tennessee remain unsettled. Additional aspects of the relation between Negro political strength and support for the American Independent Party must be examined. Other areas of the border Southeast, Virginia, Kentucky, Arkansas, and eastern Texas, have not been touched. They should be included in a more thorough treatment of the subject.

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- (1) Some might argue that the five million voters who cast their ballots for Wallace outside of the Southeast indicate a significant non-regional basis of support. This issue is not of immediate concern here.
- (2) These data, the number of Negro registered voters, by county, were also unavailable for Tennessee. This state was included in the analysis, however, for reasons demonstrated in the paper.

- (3) Although this limitation of probability-based techniques of analysis should be well-known, it is repeated here because of the potentially controversial nature of the subject matter. For a good discussion of the limits on "proving" hypotheses by statistical methods, see Hubert M. Blalock, Jr., **Social Statistics**, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1960, chapter 8.
- (4) The percentages for this map were calculated by the author from official election returns. The returns were obtained from the several Secretaries of State.
- (5) Strictly speaking, the pattern shown may be too broad to be called a "friends-and-neighbors" pattern. There are, however, sufficient similarities to justify the qualified use of the term. For a more detailed discussion of this factor in electoral geography, see V.O. Key, Jr., **Southern Politics**, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1949; Harold H. McCarty, "McCarty on McCarthy: The Spatial Distribution of the McCarthy Vote, 1952," (unpublished manuscript), State University of Iowa, Department of Geography; and, David R. Reynolds, "A 'Friends-and Neighbors' Voting Model as a Spatial Interactional Model for Electoral Geography," (unpublished manuscript), read at the annual meetings, The Association of American Geographers, Washington, D.C., August 1968.
- (6) References to this are numerous. For a brief discussion of some of the less well-known results, see Marvin Rich, "Civil Rights Progress Out of the Spotlight," **The Reporter**, Vol. 38, March 7, 1968, pp. 25-27.
- (7) These percentages were calculated by the author from data in "Voter Registration in the South, Summer, 1968," Voter Education Project, Southern Regional Council, Atlanta.
- (8) Data for X_2 , X_3 , X_4 , and X_5 were obtained from the **County and City Data Book, 1967**, U.S. Department of Commerce, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.
- (9) For a readily available discussion of the difference between the statistical significance of the multiple correlation coefficient and that of the partial correlation coefficients, see Leslie J. King, **Statistical Analysis in Geography**, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1969, pp. 142-48.
- (10) For a discussion of this use of residuals from regression, see Edwin N. Thomas, "Maps of Residuals from Regression," in **Spatial Analysis**, Brian J. L. Berry and Duane F. Marble, eds., Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1968, pp. 326-52.
- (11) Donald R. Matthews and James W. Prothro, **Negroes and the New Southern Politics**, Harcourt, Brace & World, New York, 1966, p. 159.