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Shooting's Political Impact

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The bullets that felled George C. Wallace on the eve of his greatest achievements in national politics will also upset both the conduct and the calculations of the 1972 presidential campaign.

If he could recover in time to resume some form of campaigning, the Alabama Governor may find an even more aroused constituency rallying to his cause. And some degree of sympathy vote may further swell his expected victories today in the



Democratic primaries of Michigan and Maryland. The governor had 210 delegate votes of the 1509 needed for nomination when he was struck down.

If he is forced out of the campaign, there is no one now in sight to pick up the banner of populism, tinged with an overtone of segregation, that brought the governor 9.9 million votes, or 13.5 per cent of the total cast for President, in 1968 and seemed to promise him an equally strong following this year.

No one has ever quite agreed on whether the building Wallace candidacy this year was a bigger threat to Republicans or Democrats. President Nixon has figured that he would run better in

the South without an independent Wallace challenge. The Democratic National Committee had all but decided that it could fare much better in the big industrial states of the North without a third-party Wallace challenge.

But mathematically, at least, Wallace had an even better chance this year to win 70 or 80 electoral votes and deny his major party rivals the absolute majority that is needed for a clear election by the electoral college. All the available signs suggested, that he covered such a prospect and was preparing to revive his American Independent party, in many if not all states.

Regardless of the governor's chances of recovery,

his shooting has undone four years of effort and brave self-exposure by Mr. Nixon and all those who coveted the presidency. From the President down, politicians had tried to pretend that the passions and the madness that struck down two Kennedys and Martin Luther King Jr. belonged to a remote and unhappy past, that the country was recovering its balance and that controversy could again be argued out in a civilized manner.

Now, yet another huge constituency of American voters has been made to feel that it cannot, after all, safely present controversial views and electric personalities to the electorate. That is how the New Frontiersmen felt when President John F.

Kennedy and later his brother, Robert, were gunned down by assassins at the peak of their political promise.

Mr. Nixon, Senators Hubert H. Humphrey, George McGovern and Edmund S. Muskie and all the other candidates this year, like Wallace himself, had taken enormous chances since then to expose themselves once more to the crowds at airports and in shopping centers to help the country regain its pride and confidence in orderly political competition.

They were heavily protected, but they knew that there really was no protection against the enraged act of a suicidal assailant. Mr. Nixon's first instinct,

to revive security protection for Senator Edward M. Kennedy, symbolized the first reaction everywhere in Washington that the violence of the 1960s was not over. It also dramatized the fear of Kennedy and many members of his family that whatever other calculations he might make, he ought not to tempt fate by exposing himself to a national campaign.

It was thought here that Kennedy would almost certainly be confirmed in his Presidency this year, no matter how great the pressures that were building up.

A further consequence of today's shooting is bound to be yet another effort to write stringent federal laws against the indiscriminate sale of guns.