

An Overview Of The Development And Influence Of The Republican Party

Posted on November 21, 2023

Group's Background

Often known as the “Grand Old Party”, the Republican Party is among the two main political forces in the United States. It was founded in 1854 as an alliance that opposed the spread of slavery to the Western regions. The formation of the Republican Party has a long-standing history. Although the founding fathers of America did not trust political parties, the divide amongst them was unavoidable as George Washington and Alexander Hamilton formed the Federalist Government, supported by the masses who endorsed their ideology. This was in contrast to Thomas Jefferson’s views of a limited government. These “Jeffersonian Republicans” later became popular as the “Democratic-Republicans” (The Editors of Encyclopaedia, 2021). The end of the 1812 war resulted in the dissolution of the Federalist Party, whereas the Democratic-Republicans’ evolution into the Democratic Party was initiated by President Andrew Jackson in the 1830s. Jackson’s opponents formed the Whig Party, and these two remained the country’s main political forces during the 1840s. The coalition between these two parties was broken during the 1850s with the rise of the issue of slavery and its expansion to the southern territories of the United States (History.com Editors, 2021).

In 1854, the anti-slavery ideology created a coalition between the Whigs, Democrats, Free-Soilers, and Americans, resulting in the formation of the Republican Party. The party’s first meeting was held in May 1854 in Ripon, Wisconsin. The party’s name was introduced in June 1854 in a newspaper that printed, “We should not care much whether those thus united (against slavery) were designated ‘Whig,’ ‘Free Democrat’ or something else; though we think some simple name like ‘Republican’ would more fitly designate those who had united to restore the Union to its true mission of champion and promulgator of Liberty rather than propagandist of slavery” (US History, 2022). The initial goal was not to completely abolish slavery but rather to stop its expansion. The elections of 1960 resulted in the segregation of the North and the South over the issue of slavery, and the Republican candidate Abraham Lincoln secured a victory.

Development and Influence

Founded on the idea of antislavery activism, the Republican Party propagated three important ideas, i.e., free land, free men, and free labour. Commenting on the development of the Republican Party, William H. Harbaugh states that between the years 1854 and 1912, the growth of the Republican Party was driven by mighty waves of protest. It managed to stay in power by making adjustments

during the second great wave. However, its fall from power can be attributed to a lack of intellectual and moral strength (Harbaugh, 1964). The initial influence on the party was Lincoln's ideology of the anti-slavery movement. The population from the northern states who were against slavery due to its moral implications and others like Lincoln who could see an opportunity to rise to power came together and promoted the idea that America was more about safeguarding equality rather than property (US History, 2022).

After Lincoln became president, it was not long before the Civil War broke out and continued from 1861 to 1865. This resulted in thousands of deaths and the destruction of infrastructure in the South. After Lincoln was murdered, his vice president, Andrew Johnson, who not only was a Democrat but also loathed African Americans, strived to return the country to land protection and white Americans' rise to power. Although there was a shift in the influence and ideology of the Republican Party, the loyalties of the African Americans remained with them for a better part of the late 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Lincoln's influence not only resulted in the liberation of African American slaves but also caused the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to give black men their right to liberty, equality, and the right to vote. This ideology continued under the influence of President Lyndon Johnson in 1964 with the introduction of the [Civil Rights Act](#). However, the nomination of Barry Goldwater as the party's presidential nominee had a damaging impact on its relationship with African Americans (Quince, 2016). This was followed by Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan. Each Presidential candidate influenced the party in a certain way. Following the Bush administration, the Democrats came into power when Barack Obama was elected the president of the U.S. In 2016, Donald Trump's victory brought the Republicans back in control (US History, 2022).

Republican Party's Contributions

The Republicans have contributed to various fields of study. From health care to infrastructure and technology, the party has contributed to various important projects. Dwight Eisenhower developed the interstate highway system by enacting the "Federal Aid-Highway Act" in 1956. Similarly, the Republicans put the US on the path to success in space technology by establishing the "National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)" in 1958. They contributed to the field of the environment by establishing the "Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)". The Republicans have contributed to education and healthcare research. In the field of healthcare, research is aimed at HIV/AIDS, Alzheimer's, and opioid addiction. They have also made advancements in the field of cyber security and the provision of high-speed internet in rural areas. Recently, the Republicans made amendments to the "Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act" to update drug innovation (Policy Papers, 2020).

Republican Party's Achievements

The contributions and achievements of the Republican Party go beyond the Emancipation

Proclamation, the passing of the 13th Amendment, and Lincoln's leadership during the Civil War (US History, 2022). The current interstate highway system can be attributed to the efforts of Dwight Eisenhower, and the 1956 "Federal Aid-Highway Act" is one of his major achievements after World War II. NASA was also established under Eisenhower's rule, which was signed into law in 1958, making the United States a forerunner in space technology. Eisenhower also ensured racial desegregation in schools by sending forces to Little Rock, Arkansas.

Numerous political milestones can be attributed to the leadership of President Richard Nixon. In 1972, his visit to China initiated America's desire to cultivate a harmonious relationship with Asian nations. In 1970, Richard Nixon established the EPA. He continued the efforts of Eisenhower and worked to enforce the desegregation of schools in the southern states. Ronald Reagan's greatest achievement was bringing an end to the Cold War. The Bush administration, in 2002, legalized the "No Child Left Behind Act". During his time in office, he also made efforts to promote the use of alternative fuels with the aim of reducing the dependency of the United States on foreign fuel resources (Civics Nation Admin, 2018).

A more recent overview of the Republican party's accomplishments includes the trade agreement between the USA, Mexico, and Canada. This agreement is estimated to create 176,000 jobs and improve the GDP by \$68.2 billion (Policy Papers, 2020). The party has played a central role in reshaping the country's legal system by confirming 28 District Court judges and seven circuit courts. In the last few years, their investment in medical research has approximated \$42 billion. The allocated funds were utilized to deal with illnesses such as HIV/AIDS, Alzheimer's, and cancer. Research in the field of opioid addiction and further development of alternative methods of treatment were also the aims of this investment (Civics Nation Admin, 2018). Under Trump's administration, the Department of Homeland Security worked actively on border security and also took steps to modernize the military. An increase in military funding was one of the top priorities of the Republican Party in recent years. It also offered a "Survivor Benefit Plan" for the widows of armed forces. In 2019, some other achievements of the Republican Party include providing tax relief, improving the retirement security plan, and securing miners' pensions by passing the "Bipartisan American Miners Act". In the field of education and providing support to students, Trump signed the FUTURE Act. This legalization ensured the provision of regular funds for black colleges and universities as well as other institutions serving minorities. Other infrastructure developments include providing high-speed Internet in rural areas and improving cyber security (Policy Papers, 2020).

Traditional Ideological Spectrum of the Republican Party

There are currently two major electoral parties in the United States. While the Democratic Party follows a liberal ideology, the Republican Party is closely associated with conservative values. The influence of these ideologies can be observed through the extent to which the government intervenes

in the economy and influences social behaviour. Being a party that follows the conservative ideology, the Republicans believe in a limited government that operates majorly at the local or the state level. This limited role of government should also ensure the least interference in the economy as there is a preference for solutions to problems taken at the private sector level. The views of social conservatives are ingrained in upholding traditional morality. This view of morality promotes restrictions on abortion, same-sex marriage, contraception, and any other liberal views that go against traditional society. These beliefs tend to place the conservatives on the right wing along the political axis (Khan Academy, 2022).

While the Republicans are considered conservatives, there is segregation among these Republican-associated groups. The first group, namely, Faith and Flag Conservatives, are considered strict in all aspects. These rigorous conservatives believe in upholding religious values and view any form of political compromise as the selling of one's beliefs. The Committed Conservatives, on the other hand, follow the ideology in all areas; however, they are more flexible in certain instances, such as regarding the issues of immigration. The third group is named Populist Right, and these conservatives are mostly found in rural areas. They are characterized by having little to no formal education and may be partial to immigrants and American corporations. The last and the youngest group of conservatives are the Ambivalent Right. They believe in the conservative views regarding the extent of the government's influence and also endorse their belief regarding the issues of gender, race, and economy. However, this group of political rights is in favour of legalizing abortion. They also endorse the recreational and medicinal use of marijuana. In contrast to all these groups are the Stressed Sidelines, which neither have a clear orientation nor are they actively engaged in politics. These sideliners make up approximately 15% of the population. This spectrum shows that within the conservative Republican Party, people have individual preferences based on their views about core issues such as gender equality, racial injustice, etc. (Pew Research Center, 2021).

Conclusion

Since its establishment in 1854, the Republican Party has remained one of the main political forces in the United States. It follows conservative ideals and believes in a limited role of the government, although there is a diversity of beliefs that prevails among its followers. This political party has had numerous achievements over the years. The party's major achievement, however, is racial desegregation and the promotion of equal rights for African Americans.

References

- Civics Nation Admin. (2018, July 30). Major Republican Accomplishments in US Government. *Civics Nation*. <https://www.civicsnation.org/2018/07/30/major-republican-accomplishments-us-government/>
- Harbaugh, W. H. (1964). The Growth of the Republican Party. *Current History*, 47(278), 199–243.

History.com Editors. (2021). *Republican Party*. History.
<https://www.history.com/topics/us-politics/republican-party>

Khan Academy. (2022). *Ideologies of political parties: Lesson overview (article)*. Khan Academy.
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-government-and-civics/us-gov-american-political-ideologies-and-beliefs/us-gov-ideologies-of-political-parties/a/lesson-summary-ideologies-of-political-parties>

Pew Research Center. (2021, November 9). Beyond Red vs. Blue: The Political Typology. *Pew Research Center – U.S. Politics & Policy*.
<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/11/09/beyond-red-vs-blue-the-political-typology-2/>

Policy Papers. (2020). *A Record of Republican Accomplishment*.
<https://www.rpc.senate.gov/policy-papers/a-record-of-republican-accomplishment>

Quince, A. (2016, July 15). *From Lincoln to Trump: The long evolution of the Republican party* [Current]. ABC Radio National; Australian Broadcasting Corporation.
<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/rearvision/the-long-evolution-of-the-republican-party/7625722>

The Editors of Encyclopaedia. (2021). *Republican Party | Definition, History, & Beliefs | Britannica*.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Republican-Party>

US History. (2022). *The Origins of the Republican Party*. <https://www.ushistory.org/gop/origins.htm>