

Rise of the Conservatives

Posted on September 20, 2018

American political culture has been widely debated among scholars of public policy. It's a culture that places an emphasis on individualism, liberty, and egalitarianism. The belief, values, and attitudes of the American society that form as a result of their effective, cognitive, and evaluative orientations determine their political affiliations that have mostly centered on modern liberalism and conservatism since the 20th century.

Generally, America has moved towards the liberal direction, firstly as a result of modernization and secondly due to liberal idealism. The post-World War II period saw the advance of liberalism that far surpassed socially conservative trends. Liberal reforms after the Great Depression, part of the New Deal realignment, laid the foundations for later programs, and a strong liberal coalition was built. It worked towards domination in politics and nurtured a new generation of activists who were even more liberal than their predecessors. The liberal agenda was supplemented by support from the courts and other government institutions, which resulted in many landmark rulings in their favor (Smith).

The 20th-century liberal reforms to the capitalist system came to be associated with stabilizing factors, and any conservative right-wing resistance was largely ignored and disregarded at the time. But as conservatives gathered strength, it became obvious by the 1980s that conservatives and the right-aligned groups had been misinterpreted and underestimated. It indicated that not all had bought into corporate liberalism or liberal capitalism, as people saw many conservative leaders win major victories (Smith).

The conservative movement began as groups that were opposed to liberal initiatives of the New Deal began to organize themselves and look towards finding a new approach. As opinions began to be formed and solidified in response to the New Deal, they chose the title "conservative" to define their ideas, views, and political alignment. The two main themes were concerned with free markets and social traditionalism. They argued that a minimal government provides greater liberty and individual freedom, thus leading to greater affluence. They also propose greater cutting of domestic spending, taxes, and deregulation in order to provide greater freedom to produce wealth at the national and individual levels, also known as economic libertarianism. Their social positions revolve around speaking against the decline of religion, opting for more traditional views on gender roles, family values, and morality, otherwise known as social traditionalism. They view greater military spending in a positive light and adopt hardline views against communist regimes (Himmelstein).

Conservative activity began to create ripples in the early 1960s when the movement spread out to appeal to different kinds of voters. Their primary bases were to acquire financial resources and political channels, including gaining support among the Republican Party, drawing support from corporations and the business community, and also appealing to well-educated, affluent

professionals. They started attracting a following initially mostly from people who were opposed to the growing promiscuity, drug and pornography problems and the overall moral decay, especially noticed during the sexual revolution. They appreciated unregulated capitalism after undergoing rapid progress in urbanization, industrialization, and population growth (Himmelman).

Although liberalism continued to dominate until the 1970s, there was also a religious reawakening phenomenon happening within conservative movements. Revered Jerry Falwell severely opposed the Supreme Court decision in the Roe v. Wade case and rallied Christians to join him in speaking out against abortion. Similarly, George Wallace was a conservative who had been an outspoken critic of the 1964 [Civil Rights Act](#), as, according to him, it violated principles of free enterprise, individual liberty, and private property rights (Lind).

The conservative movement rose to prominence in the public discourse during the presidential campaign between Lyndon Johnson and Barry Goldwater, where Goldwater led the American populace to a new conservative shift that reached its pinnacle in 1980 with the election of Ronald Reagan. It was considered a huge victory for the conservative movement that marked its ascent. It was a result of a successful mobilization in the 1970s for big business that provided them with greater access to political influence and access to money. Decades of corporate mobilization that saw liberal policies as one threatening their profits and emboldened their workers in the previous decades ended in a large support base for Reagan and the Republican Party's conservatives.

In the 1970s and 1980s, it was not only the dynamics of corporate conservatism and views of the new religious right-wing that had undergone changes but also the relationship between the Republican party and conservatism that began to be firmly grounded as a result of the mobilizations and activism. It can, therefore, be said that it was the conservative movement itself that played a large role in the resurrection and revival of the Republican Party back in the US political arena.

Works Cited

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