American politics

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A look at American history shows that the period between the 1960s and 1980s is referred to as the decades of change. In this era, the United States saw great social, cultural, and economic changes take place. The nation saw groups that had been subordinate or submerged rise and forcefully exerted themselves for their rights. These include African Americans, women, Native Americans, offspring of immigration, and Latinos. There were also significant events in the years, such as Vietnam, the space programs, the death of a president, the rise of a counterculture movement, the cold war, the 1970s, and the Rise of Modern Conservatism. The period is also vital because it saw a shift in the United States politics between liberals who favored progressive politics and conservatives who were keen on preserving the traditions. In this paper, I will seek to show how both liberals and conservatives adapted and shaped their views following the social, cultural, and economic changes experienced in America.

Liberals favor progressive politics. They hold that it is the role of the government to act to ensure equality and equal opportunities for all its citizens. They see the government as having the mandate to protect individuals, alleviate social ills, and promote human rights. They adapt and implement policies that are keen on ensuring that the government solves these social problems (Olson-Raymer, n.d). A look at American history shows that it was in the mid-1960s that liberal politics reached its peak in an era where people rose to agitate for their rights, politicians who subscribed to liberal views adopted and shifted their views to fit the changing times and offered their support.

One major illustration is the events that caused a shift in the liberal camp is the Civil Rights movements. The 1960s was a period that was marked with great unrest, street demonstrations, and protests, civil unrest, and riots as members of the African American Community sought to agitate for their civil rights. The protests that were led by Martin Luther King Jr, NAACP, and James Bevel, made use of the media to show the brutal treatment that protestors who were non-violent received from the police to rally support from the public. These parties advocated for the rights of the communities to be granted their constitutional rights of equality within the nation. The activisms of these parties were instrumental in bringing about political change as the then democratic president John F. Kennedy took on the burden to institute legislation that would ensure the equal rights of African Americas.

Although Kennedy died before he could achieve this goal, President Lyndon B Johnson saw the passage of enactment of the law. Drawing inspiration from the Civil Rights Movement, the Women's Movement also sought to assert their rights. According to the National Organization for Women, the women asserted that;

We, men and women, who at this moment constitute ourselves as the National Organization for Women, believe that the time has come for a new movement toward true equality for all women in America, and toward a fully equal partnership of the sexes, as part of the worldwide revolution of human rights now taking place within and beyond our national borders (Statement of Purpose, 1966).

With the support of liberals, the women were able to achieve an amendment of constitutions that ensured that they would not be discriminated against based on their gender. However, conservatives opposed to the fight for equal rights mounted a campaign in opposition to the amendment. Still, they were unsuccessful in gaining the 38 states that were necessary to ratify their cause. Thus, liberal politicians, we keen on aligning their stand with social causes as they sought to enhance the wellbeing of society. Some of the congressional passages they achieved include programs aligned with great society, such as civil rights, ending segregation, federal education aid, extending welfare, environmental activists, offering subsidies to humanities and art, legislation that sought to guarantee the rights of different groups, and reduce poverty.

In contrast, the conservative believes in a limited government, personal responsibility, free markets, traditional values, strong and national defense. Their policies are more focused on individual empowerment for them to solve problems (Olson-Raymer, n.d). The New Right conservative movement gained growth and momentum in the late 70s and early 80s. It brought together Americans from different walks of life, namely anti-tax crusaders, evangelical Christians, parties advocating for a powerful show of America abroad, smaller markets and deregulation, defenders of free-market, and disaffected white liberals (History.com Editors, 2019).

A look at the conservative politics between the 1960s and 1980s shows that they were in opposition to liberal views. For example, the protest to the democratic party leaning towards liberal views, many of the southern democrats who belonged to the middle class resorted to abandoning the democratic party (Olson-Raymer, n.d). They cited the party’s association with the legislation of civil rights, their support for the counterculture movement, and the democratic party's emphasis on providing minorities and the disadvantaged with federal assistance. Ronald Reagan, a prominent conservative during the 1980 election, is quoted saying that "I didn't leave the Democratic party it left me."

Throughout the 70s, the conservatives were opposed to the positions held by the liberals and developed their plan. However, knowing that the nation was not ready for change, they waited until after Jimmy Carter’s presidency, who was a democrat and who had experienced failure in foreign and domestic policies. Reagan ran for the top office in a period the conservatives believed that America was ready for change. As a conservative leader, Reagan's presidency changed to political discourse to focus on conservatism rather than liberalism. There was an emphasis on individualism as a traditional value and unrestrained economic acquisition. There was also a reduction in funding of anti-poverty programs implemented by Lyndon Johnson, such as school lunches, food stamps, and low-income housing (Olson-Raymer, n.d).

In conclusion, while liberals adapted to the events of the 1060s and 70s through aligning their stands with the social movements, the conservatives showed opposition to the issues. The association of the democratic party with legislations promoting equality and the fight against poverty led the white democrats from the south to leave the party. Although opposed to the liberal views, the conservative politicians took their time. They waited for a time the nation was ready for change before advocating for their beliefs and reinstating traditional values.

Reference

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