American Politics In Transition Essay, Research Paper

American Politics in Transition

For the United States, as for most states in the world, the 1980’s and 1990’s were a time of change and challenge. During this period the effects of change both within the US and internationally acted as push factors in many areas of life, including economics and politics. This sudden change was primarily due to global shocks and recessions, increased foreign economic competition, the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union, the development of revolutionary new technologies, the achievement of post-industrial society within the US, slower rates of domestic economic growth, and the demographic changes within American society.

By the Mid 1980’s important developments had occurred within interest groups, political parties. By 1990’s national debates were being held in regard to America’s future in the post-Cold War world, America’s economic competitiveness, culture, morality and the states relationship with society.

Five major things must be taken under account when discussing American politics in transition. 1) the basic nature of the American political system, 2) the sources of political change since the late 1960’s, 3) the conservative renewal and the new conservative agenda, 4) the Reagan-Bush legacy in politics and public policy 5) the new political and economic constraints in the era of divided government, and 6) the public policy environment of the 1990s.

At the core of American political culture I support for the values of liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism and laissez-faire. The nature of this society with also has glorification of the individual, and the rejection of conservative theories of organic society, hierarchy, and natural aristocracy. Being an American means accepting this liberal Democratic creed (laissez faire), while those who reject it are considered to be un-American.

America’s political evolution has also been shaped by the continental scale of the American State. The influx of immigration has caused there to be an extraordinary mixture of ethnic, racial, and religious groups spread across a continent-wide expanse that contributed historically to strong religious, racial and regional cleavages. Even its econony was spread throughout the American state. The largest sector of the economy were commercial agriculture, mercantile capitalism, mining, and heavy (capital goods) industry, but these, however, were also diversified into product specific areas.

Collectively, the cultural, geographic, and socioeconomic factors had a profound effect on America’s political development because they reinforced the trend towards decentralization and localism that had already been established in the political and legal domains by the American constitution.

The US constitutional/legal order created the most decentralized political system of an major state in the world. At the national level, under the separation of powers principle, the executive, legislative, and judicial branches operate as co-equal parts of the national government in the absence of any constitutionally prescribed hierarchy or scheme of coordination.

The division of the states and the national government under the principles of federalism further contributes to the complexity and decentralization of the American government. The relationship between the sub units, the states, and the national government in the American federal system is the reverse of the found in other federations; the US constitution assigned only enumerated powers to the national government while reserving all residual powers for the states. Although a two part system developed early in American history, it was organized at the state and local levels and retained a local focus. This local focus was continually reinforced by the fact that every political office in the country was elected as the state or local level except that of the president and vice president.

In general the US public policy has been characterized by cycles of growth and retrenchment in the scope of national government policy, reflecting the relative strength of the forces of nationalism and localism during different periods. The periods affecting the last two decades came from the cold ware, the fall of the soviet, economic, socioeconomic, the Vietnamese war and the change of the US as a multicultural and multiracial nation.

345