

Fall of conservatism and Reagan

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Before President Franklin Delano Roosevelt came to power in 1933, the majority of the US citizens endured a series of problems socially, politically, and economically that led to the Great Depression. Franklin Delano Roosevelt came up with “The New Deal Order”¹ that comprised of a series of programs that were designed to reform the country to prevent further occurrence of economic depression. The new deal order was focused on helping poor and unemployed citizens, improving the country’s financial and economic system up to the required standards. The problems that the US was facing during such times were influenced by the communist system of governance that existed in the US before Franklin Delano Roosevelt became the president.

Liberalism captured the political stage in the US when Franklin Roosevelt took charge of the USA after nomination by the Democratic party in 1932. Roosevelt belonged to the Americans who were fed up with the communist system that had created a lot of problems in the USA. He, therefore, took charge and promised the Americans a new deal that would see their lives transformed both economically and socially. The New Deal was the main part of the issues addressed by Franklin Delano Roosevelt in his acceptance speech in 1932. He became famous for his new deal, and many citizens of the US were hopeful to see what Roosevelt’s New Deal had in store for them.

In his first 100 days of presidency, Roosevelt pushed very hard and mobilized the 73rd Congress to implement the federal state of the government. He issued several executive orders that accelerated the process of implementing the New Deal. Within a short period, he managed to push for the implementation of the National Recovery Administration that helped in recovery by providing employment for jobless citizens.² He also pushed for the formation

¹ Fdrlibrary. 2012. *The blog of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum: Forward with Roosevelt*. September 6. Accessed December 16, 2019. <https://fdr.blogs.archives.gov/2012/09/06/found-in-the-archives-42/>

² McGirr, Lisa. 2002. *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*. California: Princeton University Press, 10 Feb 2002.

of Agricultural Adjustment Administration that ensured the provision of incentives to farmers who were struggling to keep up to the standards of agricultural production during the communist era of the government which resulted in a significant boost in the economic development of the United States. By 1936, the economy of the United States had improved so much that the GDP had already increased by 34 percent. The rates of unemployment had reduced from 25% to 14%.

After Roosevelt came Dwight David Eisenhower, who took charge of the United States from 1953 to 1966. He was succeeded by John F. Kennedy, who later got assassinated in 1961. The two succeeding presidents also conformed to the revolutionary ideas of Roosevelt and proceeded with the economic transformations that Roosevelt had begun. The death of John F. Kennedy saw his deputy Lyndon Baines Johnson alias 'LBJ' ascended to power in 1963. LBJ followed the footsteps of his predecessors by continuing with the already established liberalization. He came up with the "Great Society" policy to help in fighting most of the historical injustices that had occupied the American system of governance.³ The excellent society legislation enabled the American government to expand the civil rights of its citizens.

The legislation also granted a lot of freed to the various media houses by increasing public broadcasting. The legislation also led to an improvement in healthcare through Medicaid and Medicare programs that were designed to ensure that the US citizens received primary medical care.⁴ LBJ's declaration of war on poverty saw many American citizens get employed, thus, reducing the number of citizens living below the federal poverty levels. The American relations with the neighboring countries received a significant boost when LBJ

³ Schulman, Bruce J. 2006. *Lyndon B. Johnson and American Liberalism: A Brief Biography*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's,

⁴ Zelizer, Julian E. 2015. *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Lyndon Johnson, Congress, and the Battle for the Great Society*. New York: Penguin Books.

signed into law the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.⁵ The state allowed free movements of people from Europe and other parts of the world.

American Liberalism was also promoted by Ronald Reagan, who was the 40th president in the history of America. Despite being a very influential person in the modern conservatism, Reagan came up with policies that spurred economic growth all over America. He insisted on tax cuts to reduce the burden laid on poor citizens and also capped government spending. His significant attention was diverted to the military and about 35% of the government budget were spent on military issues.⁶ He succeeded in strengthening the army, thereby ensuring the protection of the borders. This move strengthened the US-Soviet Union relations and improved confidence among the Americans.

The push for liberalization in America began to fail in the late 1960s when the war in Vietnam got out of control. Lyndon Baines Johnson's massive influence over the congress saw him get power to create the congress that enabled him to design policies that escalated the involvement of America in the Vietnam war. In his foreign policy reforms, LBJ got the powers that enabled him to use the military in South East Asia without necessarily declaring a war. This move saw the number of American soldiers who were involved in the Vietnam war to increase considerably from 16,000 in 1963 to 525,000 in 1967.⁷ This war increased political instability in the US as a result of growing confrontations between the US and neighboring countries like Vietnam. Several citizens had to come up to anti-war demonstrations that saw many activities come to a standstill in the US. The excellent development records that had been achieved by Roosevelt and his successors started declining because of the increased political tension within the US.

⁵ Zelizer, Julian E. *The Fierce Urgency of Now*: (2015)

⁶ Zelizer, Meg Jacobs & Julian E. 2011. *Conservatives in Power: The Reagan Years, 1981-1989: A Brief History with Documents (The Bedford Series in History and Culture)*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.

⁷ Zelizer, Julian E. 2015. *The Fierce Urgency of Now*, (2015)

The country somehow lost focus on the New Deal Order that was initiated by President Roosevelt in 1933. The deal had three major core elements, which included the relief of the unemployed and poor citizens from the bondage of poverty; the deal also focused on the recovery of the American economic systems back the required standards. The third element of the new agreement majorly focused on improving the country's financial system through the development of policies that helped revive the struggling and already collapsed American Banks and lending institutions.

The foreign policy adopted by LBJ to continue fighting in Vietnam caused a lot of instability in the US, thereby causing the New Deal to fall into a lot of political despair. President Lyndon Baines Johnson would have been an outstanding president in the history of the United States except for the blunder he did by failing to recall the military from Vietnam. This move brought a division among the citizens of the United States that led the year 1960 ending in a traumatic condition. The Liberals and the new deal had a tough time when the Vietnam war increased the strong division that had already started developing between the Antiwar Activists and LBJ's administration.⁸ Social unrest increased as changes in sexuality led to a conservative white backlash against liberal and cultural values that were already in promotion by the New deal. The chaos caused the country divide into two groups – the liberals and the conservatives.

As early as the 1960s, the conservatives in the orange county had begun an underground mobilization to counter the plans that had already been put in place by their liberal counterparts. They believed that the American liberalisms and LBJ's idea of high society were put in place to undermine their prosperity and way of life.⁹ This led Ronald

⁸ Zelizer, Julian E. 2015. *The Fierce Urgency of Now: Lyndon Johnson, Congress, and the Battle for the Great Society*. New York: Penguin Books.

⁹ McGirr, Lisa. 2002. *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right*. California: Princeton University Press, 10 Feb 2002.

Reagan rise to power in 1980 as a result of the massive votes he received from the conservative citizens who felt it was time for the republicans to take over and protect their long time threatened conservatism ideas.

Reagan thought that implementing the conservatism ideas would be a walk in the park, but things turned out differently when he ascended to power. Implementing those policies was not easier as he had thought earlier. He had to rework some of the principles of the liberalistic system of government that had existed for quite some time. Ronald Reagan's Reaganomics had one primary concern of stimulating economic growth through the cutting of taxes government programs. This would ensure that some of the money is diverted to other sectors of the economy. Despite success in cutting government taxes, Reagan failed in reducing government spending.¹⁰ Reagans failed the country by increasing interest rates, increased borrowing, and generally increasing the inflation rates all over the US. Reagan's policies plunged the nation into a period of significant unemployment and making a balanced budget impossible for the American government. At the end of it all, there was a substantial decrease in the quality of the lives of Americans enabling wealthy citizens to prosper. Reaganomics and conservatism took back America to the earlier times of communism. This was the primary reason that led to the fall of conservatism and the era of Ronald Reagan.

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¹⁰ Zelizer, Meg Jacobs & Julian E. 2011. *Conservatives in Power: The Reagan Years, 1981-1989: A Brief History with Documents (The Bedford Series in History and Culture)*. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's.

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