

Depiction of distribution of political power in america politics essay



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The United States of America, the biggest democracy in the world, was born as such in 1787, when 55 representatives of each state gathered in Philadelphia in order to achieve a compromise, a union within states.

When we talk about America, what crosses our mind is the idea of greatness, strength and power, an enormous power of an enormous country, and its distribution is one of the major issues in American politics, whether it is an elitist or a pluralist distribution of power. Nevertheless, it is worth first of all turning one's attention to the history of the United States and this will perhaps allow us better to understand and analyse the American power.

Let's go back to the eighteenth century, when Americans were unfairly treated by the English Crown, they contributed to the metropolis and they were torn apart in every decision that concerned them so that by the middle of the eighteenth century, a negative atmosphere against Great Britain was starting to flourish. As a consequence, the War of Independence broke out in 1775; it was a revolution, a desire of freedom, and the American people, all together, achieved their independence. The 4th of July of 1776, the Declaration of Independence was signed by John Hancock, Jon Adams and Thomas Jefferson, to name just a few; and the new states formed a Republic made up by a president and a congress or assembly, this is when a democratic regime is set up in the United States. A good example of this political transformation is this quote of John Adams:

“ Let it be known, that the so called elitist's liberties are not the grants of princes or parliaments. That many of our rights are inherent and essential. Agreed on as maxims and established as preliminaries even before

government existed. We have a right to them, derived from our maker. Our forefathers have earned liberty at the expense of their ease, their estates, their pleasures, and their blood. Liberty is not built on the doctrine that a few nobles have the right to inherit the earth. It stands on this principal that the meanest and the lowest of people are by the unalterable, indefeasible laws of god and nature as well entitled to the benefit of the air to breath, light to see, food to eat, or clothes to wear as the nobles, or even a king. That is liberty, and liberty will reign in America!” (Speech by John Adams, HBO’s John Adams Series)

Moreover, the Constitution of 1787 reflects for the first time the principles of political liberalism, inspired by ideals of freedom and equality against the elitist political power of Great Britain at the time. Therefore, a federal government was created, formed by a president of the Republic, the Congress with two legislatives chambers, the House of Representatives and the Senate, and the Supreme Court. However, each state had its own government with competences in internal policy. Nevertheless, this separation of power first came from Montesquieu who suggested three different function for the government: legislative, executive and judicial. He finds liberty in the distribution of power into several hands; if two functions were held in the same person, it could lead to tyranny.

That being said, it is worth now analysing briefly the three branches of the American government. As for the Legislature (Congress) split into House of Representatives and the Senate, its main feature is to make law. According to the Founding Fathers, the Congress was supposed to be the centre of the governmental power; just to name a few competences, the Congress can <https://assignbuster.com/depiction-of-distribution-of-political-power-in-america-politics-essay/>

declare war, confirm treaties or impeach the president. Today, because it is considered as the symbol of the nation, the centre of government lies in the Executive (President) who represents the enforcement of law, having the power of veto, the grant of pardons or the nomination of judges to the Supreme Court. And finally, the Judiciary (Supreme Court) whose main feature is the interpretation of law.

In the Federalist No. 51, the fourth president of the United States and the 'Father of the Constitution', James Madison, wrote about the American power and its distribution. He said: 'If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary'. Therefore, a government is needed to maintain freedom and equality in the Hobbes' 'state of nature' in which the stronger oppresses the weaker and as a result, the interests of the individuals are reduced.

But James Madison designed a federalist government in order to get 'private rights and public happiness'. He planned a double security, that way, 'the power surrendered by the people is first divided between two distinct governments'. These two governments are the State and the Federal government, then, the civil rights of the people will be preserved. Madison made sure of that by establishing a system of checks and balances in order to keep any institution from becoming more powerful. Some of these checks and balances are the nomination of judges to the Supreme Court made by the President which are confirmed by the Congress or the judiciary reviews made by the Supreme Court. All in all, the Federal government was and still

is a huge puzzle formed by different pieces, the states, which perfectly fit and make the system work.

According to Darryl Baskin in his critique about ' American Pluralist Democracy', pluralism shows three main characteristics in Western politics which are: social diversity and balance, subsystem autonomy and separation of powers.

Nevertheless, we should bear in mind this quote of Pablo González Casanova in his essay about political power in America: ' If in the past the government could be of the people and for the people [...]...' What does this mean? Is that nowadays the United States of America doesn't have a pluralist distribution of power so that the country is made of and for the people?

If we look closer we could see that the word itself says: ' united'; the United States of America. The union within states which I talked about at the beginning of this essay. A union implies that the decisions have to be made all together, because those decisions have an effect on everyone. One of the reasons why the American citizens wanted to be independent from the English Crown was their exclusion from the matters that concerned them. So, the question that arises now is, is that the American people have institutions that were supposed to represent them and now those institutions are the ones who make decisions, in other words, the elite makes the decisions?

Let me take as a starting point.