

How democratic is the us constitution politics essay



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To begin with, the US constitution is a very broad and concise document without a beginning or end that includes so many elements of politics, and defining it as a set of ideas, rules, regulations and proposals is a purposeful generalisation. Hence, it was an arduous task for me to write an essay with such a general topic as there are so many aspects of the formation of the constitution that need a detailed scrutiny in order to have a better perception and understanding. Nevertheless, in the following essay I will focus on a notion of democratization and what the dimensions are for a state to be democratic. Later on I will attempt to examine history and outcomes of the creation of the American Constitution by the Founding Fathers.

The following speech was addressed by Sir Winston Churchill to the House of Commons directly after the World War II (Publications, 2011):

“ Many forms of government have been tried, and will be tried in this world of sin and woe. No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government, except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time”.

For this purpose, in order to obtain a vivid image of how democratic the US Constitution is we need to define the concept of democracy and what the measurements of a democratic state are – or whether they are democratic at all. According to Rose R. (2009, p. 10), every government needs to satisfy the following criteria to be described as democratic such as free elections, freedom of speech, key role players that are accountable to their citizens and who do not act according to their own interests, greater economic

prosperity, more equality and so forth. In Dahl's perspective (1989), there are solely seven dimensions: elected political officials, free and fair elections, inclusive suffrage (the right to vote for virtually all adults, the right to run for public office, freedom of expression, alternative sources of information, associational autonomy (freedom to form organizations). Furthermore, political analysts from Freedom House use the mentioned indicators as a proxy for democracy. HD°ving said thD°t, there are no precise dimensions that could D°ssess democratizD°tion for it is D°n D°mbiguous concept with a myriad of interpretations and perceptions.

According to the Freedom House data (2012), the United States' freedom rating is reported to be the 1st in the table. One might cast a doubt on the findings as Freedom House itself is based in the States and thus they are more likely to be biased when it comes down to ranking but let us have a look at the current situation on the whole in the United States. First of all, citizens of the United States have more freedom of speech and expression than citizens of other states for instance Syria or any other country in the Middle East for where anyone who opposes the government gets executed without a trial. As for the States, the situation is completely different – as a prime example we can see that 700 000 Americans petition the White House to secede from the US due to the dissatisfaction with the recent election results.

With respect to the mD°ss media in the StD°tes, it may oppose the government as well. In addition, it drD°ws the policy mD°kers' D°ttention and hD°s an effect in the sphere of politics D°s mD°ny politicD°l proposD°ls from time to time come out on the covers of newspD°pers and mD°gazines, <https://assignbuster.com/how-democratic-is-the-us-constitution-politics-essay/>

emerge from television programmes or in the internet articles and so forth. Be that as it may, one article on its own does not make any difference, but a consensus in the press may generate some actions. Irregularly points of view of some journalists are sometimes considered by the political leaders and are picked up to the agenda.

At this point it is important to look at the concept of Constitution and its prehistory and by whom it was originated. Thus what is a constitution? As P. Norton puts it (2010, p. 254) "a constitution can be defined as the system of laws, customs and conventions that defines the composition and powers of organs of the state and regulates the relations of the various state organs to one another and of those state organs to the private citizen".

After America's Revolutionary War the country's economy was in a tremendous debt that resulted in cutting down subsidies for the poor as well as pensions for the veterans, shutting down local businesses and so forth. Many farmers, which made up three quarters of the population, were forced to auction off their real estate and land for they could not meet their financial obligations. Moreover, thousands of people had to face imprisonment for failing to repay their debts. As a consequence a violent uprising broke out across the country against the government, yet the rising insurrection was ended with the help of a privately funded army. Those rebellions, also known as "founding fathers", that stood up for their rights and opposed the authorities were the first ones who laid the foundations of the current US Constitution. (Murphy, D., 2001, p. 21-31)

With the Declaration of Independence from Great Britain the seeds of democracy had taken root. Nevertheless, the state had no government and therefore the new established country was not ready to deal with the potential dangers such as military threats from Spanish colonies fighting from the South who claimed some territories, Native American tribes attempting to protect their land from the intruders, and even France that was requesting repayments of war loans. For over a decade the state was maintained by the so-called Constitution called “ the Articles of Confederation”. The above mentioned problems were partly caused by the Articles of Confederation under which all of the states were bound. Due to its principles, Congress was limited in power culminating, for instance, in being unable to regulate commerce amidst the states. In addition, Congress had to enquire the states to gather their forces to raise an army in case it declared a war. Subsequently, being frustrated with a government the framers demanded for a new Constitution written from scratches. Next, a meeting was called which was attended by the representatives of each state where they through long and hard negotiations decided to create the Constitution.

The US Constitution is one of the oldest constitutions in the world with its advantages as well as disadvantages. It is a subject of envy as it is unique amidst other constrictions of highly developed countries with a democratic form of government. Nevertheless, one of its main flaws is that the founding fathers attempted to retain the slavery during the formation of the constitution but it was altered within three amendments after the Civil War. Apart from validating the slave trade, they also used a vague language (Fiorina, M. P., 2008, p. 41)” that later Americans could interpret according to

the needs and beliefs of their age as well as protect the privileged at the expense of the underprivileged – for example, provisions protecting contracts and so forth”.

The Founding Fathers used a number of different strategies to create a plan that could suit the voters so that they would accept it. As Morris P. Fiorina (2008, p. 33) put it “ the delegates split the difference, compromising between the two sides. When their ideal system was unlikely to win voter approval, they often used vague language that would allow flexibility of interpretation later. With other conflicts, they simply delayed the decision, either by giving someone else the authority to choose or by using language whose implications would be unclear until some time had passed”. Having taken everything into consideration, it is important to say that the framers were not “ saints” as they are depicted these day in American schools as they were no different from the elected politicians of today with vested interests. Nevertheless, after the establishment of the Constitution the States improved the economic development as a consequence trade amidst the states showed better results. Secondly, the constitution has led to a unified nation. Finally, a strong executive branch was implemented.

Conclusion:

To sum up, the concept of democratization is rather ambiguous to assess, yet some political analysts are of the opinion that certain criteria could be satisfied by a state to become democratic such as elected political officials, free and fair elections, inclusive suffrage (the right to vote for virtually all adults, the right to run for public office, freedom of expression, alternative sources of information, associational autonomy (freedom to form

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organizations) and so forth. As for the Constitution, it was created by the framers (also known as the Founding Fathers) since its previous predecessor “ The Articles of Confederation” proved to be insufficient to maintain the government. Since its adoption the economy of the United States improved dramatically leading to a mutually beneficial trade between the states; the nation became more unified and finally a strong executive branch was implemented.