Ronald Reagan: Policies, Accomplishments, Influence On American Politics

American politics has been shaped over time to what it is today. Various presidents present different ideologies and policies that shape the daily lives, the economic state, and the position of America in the world. President Ronald Reagan presented as an influential figure that shaped American politics and changed its economic situation in the world. America today uses his ideologies to stabilize its economy, and several presidents have also borrowed from Reagan's optimism to steer their campaign ideologies, in a bid to rise to the White House as this paper discusses.

About Ronald Wilson Reagan

Ronald Wilson Reagan served as the 40th president of the United States of America. The president followed an exceptional path in his presidency quest as he joined politics after a successful career in radio journalism, thespian, and a television host (Mervin, 2014). He was first elected into office as the governor of California. He served for two terms then ran for presidency in 1968 and 1976. During the tough economic times and foreign policy difficulties in the US, he contested for Republican presidential nomination against George H.W Bush, won the nominations, and later he won the general elections against President Jimmy Carter.

Accomplishments of Ronald Reagan

Ronald Reagan is deemed one of the most influential presidents in the history of America. The period of his presidency, also known as the Reagan era and the conservative “Reagan Revolution” had an indelible effect on the foreign and domestic policy of the United States. During his era, the economy of the United States of America grew to make its GDP grow from -0.3% to 4.1% in 1988, creating a mean annual growth of 7.91% in current dollars. Reagan's economic policies took effect in November 1989, and immediately after he completed his two terms. 1A record of 18 million job opportunities was created. His economic reforms also gave birth to one of the most significant peacetime economic prosperity in the history of America. He also simplified the levy code by dropping the number of tax brackets to only four and reducing the number of tax breaks through the famous Tax Reform Act of 1986.

His policies led to a significant reduction in unemployment and inflation. Before his administration, the US went through a period of low economic growth and increased inflation with consistently high unemployment rates. 2His economic policies, popularly known as Reaganomics, entailed four primary principles, which reduced the government's expenditure, reduced levy rates, minimized regulations by government, and finally, to tighten the money supply to reduce the rate of inflation.

Reagan also played a fundamental role in ending the cold war. The president shifted his policy towards the Soviets from “peace through strength” to a combination of decisiveness and support when Mikhail Gorbachev ascended to power in Russia. The two presidents held four summit meetings, and during the third summit, they signed a pact that abolished all nuclear and

conventional missiles with a short and intermediate-range. Anderson & Anderson (2015) argue that Reagan’s well-founded but fair policy was significant in finishing the cold war.

Reagan Criticism

Reagan's critics, on the other hand, also argue that the president had various shortcomings that made him a terrible president. According to Bowen (2012), 3Reagan illegally sent arms to both sides of the Iran-Iraq war. As the president was supplying Iraq with weapons, he also sent weapons to Iran, which was a direct violation of the law that he had signed. He also gave in to the demands of terrorists when he gave Iran weapons for the release of Americans who were taken hostage by terrorists in Lebanon. The president failed to defend the US against terrorists when an Iraqi jet fighter fired a missile that killed 37 people. 3President Reagan supported dictators, whom he perceived as non-communists. For example, he endorsed Manuel Noriega, but immediately, he befriended Fidel Castro, the president considered him as an enemy. He also supported Saddam Hussein when he killed mass people, but years later, when Saddam threatened the oil supply, he was considered an enemy. He also supported Ferdinand Marcos from Philippine even after killing his political rival and engaging in electoral irregularities.

Lessons from Ronald Reagan’s leadership

Reagan’s style of leadership was humble, and he firmly believed that anything was possible in America. He believed that humans being are only limited by their imaginations and spirit. America and the world can draw a few lessons from Reagan's leadership style and policies that helped America grow from during his regime. Reagan was an optimistic person, and he understood the power of optimism. His unwavering confidence in the capability of the American people helped him navigate the country through its clash with the Soviet Union during the cold war (Flowers 2019). During this period and regardless of the challenges the country faced, he maintained the spirit of a happy fighter, and he never made a case for an individual, liberty, limited administration, but a free world.

President Reagan believed that socialism did not work and needed to be eradicated. He boldly called out the evils and the dangers of the socialist ideologies to the health and liberty of human beings all over the world. The current world has a generation that lacks memories of the battle of ideologies and the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union. To the new generation, the ancient and empty promises made by the socialists seem to hold a fresh appeal. However, when one weighs freedom against socialism in an ideology weighing scale, freedom will always be heavier based on merit. However, it cannot hold water if no one is speaking about it, and people must speak about it not only persuasively but also boldly and enriched with facts. According to Flowers (2019), One of Reagan’s famous quotes that advocating against socialism states that 'Freedom is not just the birthright of the few, it is the God-given right of all His children, in every country. It won't come by conquest. It will come because freedom is right and freedom works.'

Another important lesson from Reagan's leadership is that the strength of American is with the people but not its leaders. America has been and will always be a country defined by the voices and the votes of its unique citizens. Criticizing the leadership of the country from afar does not provide a solution to the country's problems. As much as leaders affect the history of a country, their wisdom help to define moments, nations are not built on the leaders. The people of a country are the cornerstone, the secret of her success and her future too.

Relevance of Ronald Reagan today

Ronald Reagan was president about four decades ago, but his ideas and style of leadership remain relevant to date. His ideologies supply economics and maintain a superior defense establishment to date. Before consigning Reagan to the books of history, it is essential to evaluate some of his ideas and leadership styles and asses their relevance to the contemporary world. The president aroused the better angels of America’s nature when he reinstated the self-confidence and the future of the American people.

He also implemented the principle of limited administration to the country's economy, reducing levies and developing other supply measures, for example, deregulation and decreased spending by the national government, which led to an unprecedented era of economic opulence that have taken America to the 21st century. Reagan also maintained that cutting down the levies would increase people's expenditures or their savings depending on their earnings. The reduction would also make the citizens more industrious, push them to work hard, and the money earned would be used to fuel the economy further, leading to national progress.

President Ronald Reagan introduced conservatism into the mainstream politics of the United States, and much of his politics made America ready for the trials and encounters of the 21st century. He was not perfect, but his bond with the people remains indelible until now. For example, Shirley (2014) argues that the republicans view Reagan as an individual who represents charisma, great ideology, and prominence. Ronald put the country ahead of politics, and he would be uncomfortable right now with the current Republican politics since the political environment in America today is very personalized. However, American politics is still based on ideologies, and the citizens vote for the people they feel present the best thinking that will serve the country's interests. Americans voted for Obama because they thought Obama presented a better ideology, which resonated with them as compared to his counterpart Romney. Americans also voted Trump because they felt America was losing its might in the world arena, and Trump promised them to make “America great again.” However, President Trump has fallen short of the people's expectations, thus leading to motions and debates about his impeachment. This is a clear indication that Reagan's principle that the success of a country depends on her people but not the leaders is still in play. President Obama borrowed from Reagan's optimism and believed that there was hope that America could be better than it was hence his campaign slogan, 'Yes We Can.'

Conclusion

In conclusion, president Reagan influenced American politics massively. Through his ideologies and policies, he took America out of inflation, economic stagnation, and lack of employment. Reagan put his country first before his political party and embraced the ideology of political parties working together for a more exceptional nation. He was against socialist ideologies and highly advocated against them. He believed that a country's success and destiny lies in the hands of the people and not its leaders. Leaders make historical events, but the citizens drive a nation to its destiny because they have sovereign power.