

A Chinese Kaleidoscope; An American Mosaic

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Beyond local officials like county and city mayors, each state's federal officials in the Senate and House of Representatives are also chosen by the common people in elections. Positions in the Senate and House of Representatives are of relatively higher status; senators and state representatives are the true legislators. Such officials have the power to revise federal laws that affect the entire nation. The United States is composed of fifty states, and in each state two senators are elected to represent the state in the United States Senate. The length of a senator's term is six years. The number of representatives a state elects and sends to the House of Representatives is decided by the population of the state. There is roughly one representative for each million or million and a half people, and the length of term is two years. The state of Alaska has just one representative. The Senate and House of Representatives are composed mostly of members of the Democrats and Republican parties. In the United States legislature, officials generally first hold office in the House of Representatives and then later seek to be elected for a seat in the Senate. Even if a bill passes through the Senate and House of Representatives, it can still be vetoed by the president. However, if the bill is passed in both the Senate and the House of Representatives by a two-thirds majority, then it cannot be vetoed and must be signed into law. Therefore the United States' democratic system truly reflects the will of the people.

The president has the power to appoint the head of each government department, but the candidate must be ratified first by the Senate and the House of Representatives. If the majority does not approve, then another candidate must be nominated. Especially important appointments, such as those for the offices of Secretary of State and Secretary of Defense, must pass through a legislative hearing. During the hearing, candidates are asked many difficult questions by members of both the Senate and the House of Representatives. Other than this, the vice ambassador to the United Nations must also be approved in a vote by the Senate and House of Representatives. Since the two political parties are opposed to each other in the debate process, a candidate nominated by a Democrat president will face many difficult questions about his or her political position by Republican legislators. This type of legislative hearing is meant to determine if the candidate is qualified for the position, and whether he or she will be up to the task after taking office. Prudent candidates answer in ways that please both sides. Sometimes damaging rumors about candidates will surface when they are nominated for a position. In such cases the candidate will often back down from the nomination in order to avoid a difficult situation.

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The United States military has three levels of leadership. The first and highest is the president, who is the commander-in-chief. The second highest is the Secretary of Defense, who is most often a scholar. The third is a general, who is a soldier or comes from a military academy. To become a general, one must have been born in the United States. Naturalized citizens cannot become generals. Enlisted soldiers are often young people who sign up to serve for two or three years and are then demobilized. These soldiers are not always citizens or permanent residents. In times of war, illegal immigrants can also join the military. After demobilization, such illegal immigrants will receive permanent legal residence, a “green card”. The government pays the tuition and housing expenses of soldiers who enter college or university after demobilization. If a soldier instead decides to start a small business after demobilization, he or she can get apply for a special loan from the government Small Business Administration. When buying a house, soldiers can also receive a government allowance.

Generally speaking, soldiers are treated better in the United States than in other countries. The United States military of course has armaments such as air craft carriers, warplanes, submarines, tanks, and artillery. However, the military must resolve conflicts quickly, and has difficulty dealing with guerrilla warfare, terrorist attacks, and long-lasting wars. The military is afraid of its soldiers dying because if several thousand soldiers were to die, the general population would begin to protest and oppose the war, and the opposition party would also speak out against the war, creating many headaches for the political party in power.

The arms industry in the United States became very developed in the past due to a strong manufacturing industry. After the conclusion of the Second World War, the United States and the Soviet Union were in opposition to each other. Although the livelihood and industry of the Soviet Union was backward, the arms industry was very developed, and so in the Cold War it was impossible to tell who was winning. However, in the 1980s the United States began to wage a type of human rights war, putting itself under the banner of democracy and economic prosperity. The ideas of freedom, democracy, and living well were promoted, and in this way the Soviet Union soon fell. The human rights movement would later also end up triggering the 1989 Tiananmen incident in China.

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The United States often sends aid to countries that are weak and poor since it is a wealthy nation with a powerful military. Since the economy and government of such countries are often unstable and chaotic, they request aid from the United States. Sometimes the support of the military is requested if the country is involved in a war. However, often the problems such countries face are too great to be solved by foreign economic or military assistance, and the money spent in aid can end up being wasted. Since the government receiving aid is incompetent, it is only a matter of time before it is overthrown by the people. The resulting disaster also requires help from the United States to solve. Although the United States gives aid in such situations, the local people do not feel grateful at all, and as a result the United States is stuck in a difficult position.

Twenty six: The Korean and Vietnam Wars share the limelight. The Second Iraq War results in occupation, but not victory.

The United Nations was established in 1945 as an international organization headed by the United States. The general headquarters was established in New York's Manhattan on East 42nd Street on land given by the magnate John Rockefeller. The United Nations' mission was to maintain world peace and prevent the occurrence of a third world war. If an international conflict arises, the United Nations is the first to try to mediate between opposing sides. Following that, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, China, England, the United States, the Soviet Union, and France, will engage in talks. Each of these countries on the council possesses veto power. Once a motion has been vetoed by one of the members of the Security Council, it cannot be reconsidered. There are currently over one hundred members of the United Nations. In past meetings of the United Nations, the United States was always the head, but now many smaller nations act independently and the United States is many times unable to control the decision making.

In the more than sixty years since the end of the Second World War, the United States has had three major conflicts with other nations: the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and the two Iraq Wars. In these efforts the United States has expended numerous resources and manpower, and sacrificed the lives of many Americans without any genuine victories.

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The incomes of average Americans in the city and in the countryside are quite similar due to the fact that the federal government enforces a national minimum wage. There really is not much of a discrepancy between the incomes of the urban and rural populations. Therefore one can choose to live in the noisy, exciting city or the tranquil countryside without accepting lower wages. In the city, there are opportunities for employment throughout the year. In the countryside however, the agricultural work is seasonal and stops during the winter months.

The lives of American farmers in the countryside cannot be compared with the diversity of the cities, but it does possess the scenery that the city lacks. In the summer one can pilot a boat and enjoy the water and mountains. Farmers own private aircraft used to disperse seeds, fertilizer, and pesticides. During vacation time, they can fly the planes among the clouds and observe the awe-inspiring scenery.

The United States is a nation of many types of taxes. Said briefly, any transfer of goods requires paying tax to the government. In addition to this, workers must pay a part of their paycheck towards social security, disability insurance, and unemployment insurance. When buying merchandise, one must pay sales tax. On bank interest or returns from investments in stock, one must pay capital gains tax. It seems that in New York's Manhattan, cars are unwanted, as the parking tax has been doubled. When staying in a hotel, one must pay a hotel tax, and even to see a play one must pay tax. If you have money or property that you want to give to someone, whether a person or business, you must pay tax if it is over a certain amount (currently ten thousand dollars). There is also a tax to pay when importing or exporting goods. Taxes on vices such as alcohol and cigarettes are even higher. Despite the numerous taxes collected from the people, the government's excessively bloated expenses ensure that all of it is wasted in numerous different ways. Even when collecting so many taxes, the government manages to run a massive deficit.

In the United States the relationship between the people and the local, state, and federal governments is very close since the officials all come from the people. All it requires is hard work and a little bit of luck and any common person can become an official. Of course, support from the people is necessary. Not only can common people compete in elections, but so too can soldiers.