

Period 9: 1980 to the Present

In a Nutshell

As the United States transitioned to a new century filled with challenges and possibilities, it experienced renewed ideological and cultural debates, sought to redefine its foreign policy, and adapted to economic globalization and revolutionary changes in science and technology.

Key Concepts

Part 1

- A. A newly ascendant conservative movement achieved several political and policy goals during the 1980s and continued to strongly influence public discourse in the following decades.
- B. Conservative beliefs regarding the need for traditional social values and a reduced role for government advanced in U.S. politics after 1980.

Part 2

- C. Moving into the 21st century, the nation experienced significant technological, economic, and demographic changes.
- D. New developments in science and technology enhanced the economy and transformed society, while manufacturing decreased.
- E. The U.S. population continued to undergo demographic shifts that had significant cultural and political consequences.

Part 3

- F. The end of the Cold War and new challenges to U.S. leadership forced the nation to redefine its foreign policy and role in the world.
- G. The Reagan administration promoted an interventionist foreign policy that continued in later administrations, even after the end of the Cold War.
- H. Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, U.S. foreign policy efforts focused on fighting terrorism around the world.

Significant Topics

1. Reagan's Conservative "Revolution" and Policies that Followed

Ronald Reagan's victory in the presidential election of 1980 represented an important milestone, allowing conservatives to enact significant tax cuts and continue the deregulation of many industries. Conservatives argued that liberal programs were counterproductive in fighting poverty and stimulating economic growth. Some of their efforts to reduce the size and scope of government met with inertia and liberal opposition, as many programs remained popular with voters. Policy debates continued over free-trade agreements, the scope of the government social safety net, and calls to reform the U.S. financial system.

- a. Ronald Reagan

- b. supply-side economics (Reaganomics)
- c. Economic Recovery Tax Act, 1981
- d. sagebrush rebellion
- e. Contract with America, 1994
- f. *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, 1992
- g. increase in the budget deficit and national debt
- h. The Third Way
- i. North American Free Trade Agreement, 1993
- j. Medicare Modernization Act, 2003
- k. Affordable Care Act, 2010

2. **The End of the Cold War and the Events that Followed**

President Reagan asserted U.S. opposition to communism through speeches, diplomatic efforts, limited military interventions, and a buildup of nuclear and conventional weapons. Increased U.S. military spending, Reagan's diplomatic initiatives, and political changes and economic problems in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union were all important in ending the Cold War.

a. Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI)

b. Mikhail Gorbachev

c. Iran-Contra Scandal, 1987

d. Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START)

e. Intermediate Nuclear Force Treaty, 1987

f. Fall of the Berlin Wall, 1989

g. Fall of the Soviet Union, 1991

h. Persian Gulf War, 1991

i. Dayton Agreement, 1995

j. Bombing of Yugoslavia, 1999

3. **The War on Terrorism**

In the wake of attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the United States launched military efforts against terrorism and lengthy, controversial conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. The war on terrorism sought to improve security within the United States but also raised questions about the protection of civil liberties and human rights.

a. Al Qaeda

b. Taliban

c. Attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, September 11, 2001

d. Patriot Act, 2001

e. Department of Homeland Security, 2001

f. War in Afghanistan, 2001

g. Iraq War, 2003-2011

h. weapons of mass destruction

4. **Changes in the American Economy**

Economic productivity increased as improvements in digital communications enabled increased American participation in worldwide economic opportunities. Employment increased in service sectors and decreased in manufacturing, and union membership declined. Real wages stagnated for the working and middle class amid growing economic inequality.

a. Rust Belt

b. boomburbs:

5. **Technology, Energy, and the Environment**

Technological innovations in computing, digital mobile technology, and the Internet transformed daily life, increased access to information, and led to new social behaviors and networks. Conflicts in the Middle East and concerns about climate change led to debates over U.S. dependence on fossil fuels and the impact of economic consumption on the environment.

a. information technology

b. Kyoto Agreement, 1997

c. global warming

6. **Immigration and Domestic Migration**

After 1980, the political, economic, and cultural influence of the American South and West continued to increase as population shifted to those areas. International migration from Latin America and Asia increased dramatically. The new immigrants affected U.S. culture in many ways and supplied the economy with an important labor force.

a. Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986

b. Immigration Act of 1990

7. The Transformation of American Society

Intense political and cultural debates continued over issues such as immigration policy, diversity, gender roles, and family structures.

- a. cultural pluralism

- b. glass ceiling

- c. Don't Ask, Don't Tell, 1994

- d. Defense of Marriage Act, 1996

- e. Nancy Pelosi

- f. Barack Obama

- g. *United States v. Windsor*, 2013

- h. *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015

9. The United States in the Early 21st Century

Despite economic and foreign policy challenges, the United States continued as the world's leading superpower in the 21st century.