

Reagan and Conservatism

Theme: Politics and Power

Learning Objective 9.B: Explain the causes and effects of continuing policy debates about the role of the federal government over time.

Reagan Revolution

KC-9.1.1.A: 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.

- 1980 Election
 - Breaks up _____ - converted _____ Democrats
 - Aided by fundraising from conservative groups - _____
- Deregulation
 - Eases restrictions on financial institutions, mergers and acquisitions, _____ regulations, increased oil drilling and coal mining on federal land.
- _____ / supply-side Economics
 - Tax cuts meant to increase private spending, leads to more jobs
 - _____ cuts income, corporate, estate, capital gains taxes
 - Cuts spending in _____ programs negated by increase in _____ spending
 - Annual deficits lead to _____ of national debt by 1988

Conservative Ideology

KC-9.1.1.B: Conservatives argued that liberal programs were counterproductive in fighting poverty and stimulating economic growth...

- Case against liberal programs
 - Argue federal assistance makes people complacent, private industry can take place of some gov. services
 - Reagan cut _____ from _____, _____, mass transport.

Resistance to Conservative Policies

KC-9.1.1.B: ...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.

- Liberal opposition
 - Unions continued to strike and organize despite falling membership
 - Democratic _____ in at least one chamber of Congress through 1980s

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- Voter opposition
 - Programs like _____, _____ popular with reliable voters
 - Increased contributions to SS, pushed age to _____
 - G. H. W. Bush campaign promise "Read my lips, _____"

Policy Debates

KC-9.1.1.C: Policy debates continued over free-trade agreements, the scope of the government social safety net, and calls to reform the U.S. financial system.

- Free Trade Agreements
 - Under G. H. W. Bush US entered into _____ (NAFTA) - worry over losing manufacturing jobs to Mexico
- Reform to US Financial System
 - _____ in 1980s cost taxpayers, Congress passes Financial Institutions Reform, Recovery, and Enforcement ACT (FIRREA) in 1989
 - Deregulation under conservatives, led to _____ (see 9.6)
- Size of Government Safety Net
 - _____ (PRWORA) in 1996 under Clinton and (R) Congress
 - States greater power in _____ and _____ of benefits
 - Attempt to _____ Social Security by George W. Bush
 - Fear of _____ running dry due to retiring _____

Conservative Beliefs

KC-9.1.1: Conservative beliefs regarding the need for traditional social values and a reduced role for government advanced in U.S. politics after 1980.

- Reagan and Bush add to conservative majority on SC
 - Limits on abortion (_____, 1993) and affirmative action (_____, 2003)
 - Gun rights strengthened - _____ (2008) _____ (2010)
- Reduced role for government mostly in regulations and welfare
 - Reagan increased spending on defense

- G.H.W. Bush passes Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990

Political and Cultural Debates

KC-9.2.II.C: Intense political and cultural debates continued over issues such as immigration policy, diversity, gender roles, and family structures.

- Immigration Policy (See 9.3)
 - 1986 _____ (IRCA) - provides amnesty to undocumented migrants, creates penalties for employing undocumented workers
 - 2012 _____ (DACA) - E.O. allows for "Dreamers" to work, get driver's licenses, stay on good behavior
- Diversity
 - Affirmative action, _____ (2016) consideration of race allowed*
- AIDS Crisis
 - HIV virus begins spreading in 1980s
 - Preventative measures or education on virus limited due to stigma surrounding infections
- Family Structures
 - Same-sex marriage opposed by conservatives - _____ (1996) - overturned by _____ (2015)
 - Single-women led household from _____ million (1970) to _____ million (2000)
- Gender Roles
 - Women still experience wage gap
 - _____ (2009) increases recourse for discrimination

Recap

- Reagan's presidency focused on tax cuts, cuts on spending and deregulation
- Resistance from voters and liberals to cuts on popular programs were successful
- Conservatives favored free-trade agreements, reducing the scope of government, and deregulating financial system
- Social conservatives made ground on issues like abortion, affirmative action, and gun rights through Supreme Court decisions
- Cultural debates on immigration, diversity, family structure still continue to the present day

Part II

Short Answer Questions

Answer the following in AT LEAST three sentences.

1. Explain the causes and effects of continuing policy debates about the role of the federal government over time.

First Inaugural Address of Ronald Reagan (1981)

Retrieved from: <http://www.americanyawp.com/reader/29-the-triumph-of-the-right/first-inaugural-address-of-ronald-reagan-1981/>

So, as we begin, let us take inventory. We are a nation that has a government—not the other way around. And this makes us special among the nations of the Earth. Our Government has no power except that granted it by the people. It is time to check and reverse the growth of government which shows signs of having grown beyond the consent of the governed.

It is my intention to curb the size and influence of the Federal establishment and to demand recognition of the distinction between the powers granted to the Federal Government and those reserved to the States or to the people. All of us need to be reminded that the Federal Government did not create the States; the States created the Federal Government.

...

If we look to the answer as to why, for so many years, we achieved so much, prospered as no other people on Earth, it was because here, in this land, we unleashed the energy and individual genius of man to a greater extent than has ever been done before. Freedom and the dignity of the individual have been more available and assured here than in any other place on Earth. The price for this freedom at times has been high, but we have never been unwilling to pay that price.

It is no coincidence that our present troubles parallel and are proportionate to the intervention and intrusion in our lives that result from unnecessary and excessive growth of government. It is time for us to realize that we are too great a nation to limit ourselves to small dreams. We are not, as some would have us believe, doomed to an inevitable decline. I do not believe in a fate that will all on us no matter what we do. I do believe in a fate that will fall on us if we do nothing. So, with all the creative energy at our command, let us begin an era of national renewal. Let us renew our determination, our courage, and our strength. And let us renew our faith and our hope.

1. **Provide an Attribution for the document:**
2. **Use the document to support the thesis: “The rise of the Conservative Movement in the 1980s is largely responsible for making the size of the federal government and social issues a primary concern for the American people.”**
3. **Choose one of the analysis topics from HAPP and provide a 2 sentence analysis of the document.**
4. **Give an A-C-E response on a piece of outside evidence that is relevant to the document and topic of the thesis**

Jerry Falwell on the “Homosexual Revolution” (1981)

Retrieved from: <http://www.americanyawp.com/reader/29-the-triumph-of-the-right/jerry-falwell-on-the-homosexual-revolution-1981/>

I refuse to stop speaking out against the sin of homosexuality.

With God as my witness, I pledge that I'll continue to expose the sin of homosexuality to the people of this nation. I believe that the massive homosexual revolution is always a symptom of a nation coming under the judgement of God.

Romans 1:24-28, Paul clearly condemns the sin of homosexuality. In verse 28, when a nation refuses to listen to God's standards of morality, the bible declares, "God gave them over to a reprobate mind."

Recently 250,000 homosexuals marched in the streets of San Francisco. Several weeks ago 75,000 more were marching in the streets of Los Angeles. Homosexuals are on the march in this country.

Please remember, that homosexuals do not reproduce! They recruit!

And, many of them are out after my children and your children.

And if you will support me with your prayers and offerings, I will continue speaking out—no matter what the opposition says.

You may be sure—militant gays are doing everything they can to silence me!

5. Provide an Attribution for the document:

6. Use the document to support the thesis: "The rise of the Conservative Movement in the 1980s is largely responsible for making the size of the federal government and social issues a primary concern for the American people."

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Pat Buchanan on the Culture War, 1992 Republican National Convention

Retrieved from: <http://www.americanyawp.com/reader/29-the-triumph-of-the-right/pat-buchanan-on-the-culture-war-1992/>

The presidency, my friends, is also an office that Theodore Roosevelt called America's "bully pulpit." Harry Truman said it was "preeminently a place of moral leadership." George Bush is a defender of right-to-life, and a champion of the Judeo-Christian values and beliefs upon which America was founded.

Mr. Clinton however, has a different agenda. At its top is unrestricted abortion on demand. When the Irish-Catholic Governor of Pennsylvania, Robert Casey, asked to say a few words on behalf of the 25 million unborn children destroyed since Roe v Wade, Bob Casey was told there was no room for him at the podium at Bill Clinton's convention, and no room at the inn. Yet a militant leader of the homosexual rights movement could rise at that same convention and say: "Bill Clinton and Al Gore represent the most pro-lesbian and pro-gay ticket in history." And so they do. Bill Clinton says he supports "school choice"—but only for state-run schools. Parents who send their children to Christian schools, or private schools, or Jewish schools, or Catholic schools, need not apply.

Elect me, and you get "two for the price of one," Mr. Clinton says of his lawyer-spouse. And what does Hillary believe? Well, Hillary believes that 12-year-olds should have the right to sue their parents. And Hillary has compared marriage and the family, as institutions, to slavery and life on an Indian reservation. Well, speak for yourself, Hillary.

This, my friends, is radical feminism. The agenda that Clinton & Clinton would impose on America: abortion on demand, a litmus test for the Supreme Court, homosexual rights, discrimination against religious schools, women in combat units. That's change, all right. But that's not the kind of change America needs. It's not the kind of change America wants. And it's not the kind of change we can abide in a nation we still call "God's country."

9. Provide an Attribution for the document:

10. Use the document to support the thesis: "The rise of the Conservative Movement in the 1980s is largely responsible for making the size of the federal government and social issues a primary concern for the American people. "

11. Choose one of the analysis topics from HAPP and provide a 2 sentence analysis of the document.

12. Give an A-C-E response on a piece of outside evidence that is relevant to the document and topic of the thesis

Secondary Source Document Analysis

Read the essay and fill in the chart below. Identify one claim for each subsection of the essay and provide a piece of evidence that corresponds to the claim.

Title:	
Author:	
Historical Period and Topic:	
Thesis:	
Claims	Evidence
Identify an alternative viewpoint to the author's thesis.	
Does the author address this viewpoint by refuting or conceding to it?	

The Age of Reagan

Retrieved from: <http://ap.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/essays/age-reagan?period=9>

The Reagan Revolution of the 1980s sought to change Americans' attitudes toward their country, their government, and the world, as the United States emerged from the 1970s. Ronald Reagan entered the White House in January 1981 promising to restore Americans' faith in their nation and themselves, to shrink "Big Government," and to defend America more aggressively, especially against the Soviet Union. During his two terms in office, President Reagan continued his decades-long battle against Great Society liberalism, the activities and ideas of the 1960s' student rebels and 1970s' defeatists, and the spread of Communism. Reagan's American restoration delivered patriotism, prosperity, and peace. American pride revived as the economy soared and the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe collapsed. "All in all," Reagan said in his 1989 farewell address, "not bad, not bad at all."

Critics consider the Reagan Revolution reactionary, an assault against the great liberal gains that, over the previous fifty years, had democratized and humanized America. They claim Reagan widened the gap between rich and poor, encouraged greed, and threatened the accomplishments of the civil rights, feminist, and environmental movements. The intensity of the ongoing debate more than three decades after his inauguration demonstrates the Reagan Revolution's continuing resonance.

As president, Reagan challenged the problems of the 1970s. During that decade, America had seemed adrift, demoralized by the loss of the Vietnam War, humiliated by the Watergate scandal and Richard Nixon's resignation, endangered by Soviet expansion, disrespected by Third World dictators, starved of oil, battered by inflation, haunted by unemployment, menaced by crime, imprisoned by doubt. Reagan and his fellow conservatives blamed "Big Government," meaning the welfare state, for the domestic troubles, accusing government bureaucrats of mismanaging the economy and crushing individual initiative. Conservatives championed "supply side" economics, trusting that cutting taxes and regulation would allow Americans to produce—supply—more. Reaganaut conservatives also blamed government growth on Communism's influence, which to them also explained America's failure to confront the Soviet Union. While by the 1970s, most conservatives endorsed the Civil Rights Movement, they fought against abortion, busing, and the negative impact they believed the sixties' movements, including feminism, had had on American families and society.

Born in 1911 in Illinois, Ronald Reagan was a New Deal Democrat in the 1930s and a famous "B" movie actor in the 1940s, who by the 1950s believed the Democrats were overtaxing and over-regulating. He always insisted: "Maybe my party changed. I didn't." Reagan's acting background caused many to underestimate him in politics; he wondered how anyone could be in politics without first having been in show business.

In 1964, Reagan gave a nationally broadcast speech for Barry Goldwater's presidential campaign. Goldwater lost, but "The Speech," as it was remembered, helped launch Reagan's political career. Goldwater's conservatism was cranky; Reagan's came with a happy face and light quips, as he claimed, for example, that "The nine most terrifying words in the English language are, 'I'm from the government and I'm here to help.'"

Prominent California businessmen urged him to run for governor. He did, and he won. During his two terms as California's governor, from 1967 to 1975, Reagan was beloved by the right and hated by the left. He confronted radicals in Berkeley and mocked hippies as people who "dress like Tarzan, have hair like Jane, and smell like Cheetah." Yet despite his bravado, he compromised on key conservative principles, including signing a 1967 bill allowing abortions if necessary for the mother's health.

After losing the Republican nomination to President Gerald Ford in 1976, Reagan unseated the Democratic President Jimmy Carter in 1980. This became an "ABC" election, with many choosing "Anybody but Carter," yet Reagan claimed he had received a mandate for change. His Electoral College vote of 489 to 49 magnified his bare majority of 50.7 percent of popular votes cast. Carter received 41 percent and the Republican renegade John Anderson attracted 6.6 percent. Republicans also captured the Senate for the first time in thirty years, although the House of

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Representatives remained Democratic.

As president, Reagan promised to cut the budget, reduce taxes, trim the bureaucracy, revive America, and subdue the Soviets. At his inauguration, he proclaimed: "In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem." During his first seven and a half months in office, Reagan unveiled "Reaganomics," securing the largest budget cut ever—some \$35 billion in domestic spending from Jimmy Carter's request—and reducing the personal income tax rate by almost one quarter. In March 1981, a crazed gunman shot Reagan. The President's wisecracks throughout the ordeal increased his popularity, overcoming what had been growing opposition to the cutbacks. In the operating room, Reagan quipped, "I hope you are all Republicans." His surgeon, a Democrat, replied: "Today, Mr. President, we are all Republicans."

By the summer of 1981, with Americans experiencing the highest unemployment rate since the Great Depression, Democrats attacked the "Reagan Recession." Getting traction on the "Fairness Issue," critics led by the Democratic Speaker of the House, Tip O'Neill, attacked the President as Mr. Magoo, a bumbling anti-Communist cowboy, a reverse Robin Hood, and a warmonger. They said he cut taxes for the rich and burdened the poor while risking nuclear war by calling the Soviet Union the "Evil Empire." They mocked his gaffes, from blaming air pollution on trees to falling asleep at Cabinet meetings—which he defused by insisting: "I have left orders to be awakened at any time in case of national emergency, even if I'm in a Cabinet meeting." In 1982, twenty-seven new Democratic House seats restored the losses from 1980, although the Senate remained Republican. Pundits eulogized Reagan's failed presidency.

The economy revived before Reagan had to face the electorate for re-election. A ninety-six-month-long economic boom began, and ultimately yielded 20 million new jobs. Inflation dropped from double-digit levels under Carter to 8.9 percent in 1981, then to 4 percent in 1984. With American pride returning too, Reagan blessed the prosperity as "Morning in America."

Reagan's second term was rockier than the first. The oldest president ever, he turned seventy-four shortly after his second inauguration. In 1985, his visit to a military cemetery in Bitburg, Germany, that also had the graves of Nazi SS killers shook his standing as America's popular patriot. In 1986, the Iran-Contra scandal, involving illegal arms shipments to Iran and Central America, along with the Democratic recapture of the Senate, further diminished his popularity and power. In 1987, Reagan could not even get Robert Bork, his first choice to fill a Supreme Court vacancy, confirmed by the Senate.

Yet the Reagan Revolution was redeemed as the economic boom continued, pride in America surged, and the Cold War ended. Initially, Reagan, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and Pope John Paul II were ridiculed for believing Soviet Communism was beatable. By 1985, when the young reformer Mikhail Gorbachev rose to power in the Soviet Union, Soviet weakness became more obvious.

Reagan had a surprising anti-nuclear, pacifist streak, despite his saber-rattling and massive defensive buildup. In summit meetings with Gorbachev, America's anti-Communist president proved friendly and flexible. In June 1987, when visiting West Berlin and standing at the Berlin Wall, which the Soviets had erected to prevent East Germans from fleeing to the free West, Reagan demanded: "Mr. Gorbachev tear down this wall." This dramatic moment helped Reagan claim that his approach beat Communism as the Berlin Wall fell, Soviet domination of Eastern Europe came to an end, and, by 1991, the Soviet Union disappeared. Although America's victory in the Cold War was a bipartisan triumph, stretching back to Harry Truman's "containment strategy," the Reagan Revolution deserves credit too.

Ronald Reagan called his presidency "the great rediscovery"—"a rediscovery of our values and our common sense." He retired, still encouraging Americans to make America "a shining city upon the hill," frustrated that his "revolution" only slowed the rate of government growth. Reagan won a virtual third term as his vice president, George H.W. Bush, succeeded him.

Promising a "kinder, gentler" nation, President Bush continued Reagan's revolution with a softer touch, alienating fewer liberals. When the

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Democrat Bill Clinton ran for president in 1992, he targeted Reaganite “greed,” accusing Reagan of neglecting middle-class Americans as the gap between rich and poor grew. Many Americans considered the 1991–1992 downturn payback for Reagan’s high budget deficits.

Still, Reagan’s anti-government message resonated, even in a Democratic administration. Clinton won re-election in 1996, only after pronouncing “The era of big government is over” and reforming welfare. As Ronald Reagan faded into the haze of Alzheimer’s, and as the Reagan-Bush-Clinton economic boom, which was the result of the Baby Boom, continued, Americans remembered Reagan fondly as the prince of peace and prosperity, a genial, witty optimist who restored American pride and patriotism.

After 2000, many Democrats who hated George W. Bush forgot how much they had detested Reagan, to prove they did not hate all Republicans. When Barack Obama ran for president in 2008, he called Reagan a transformational leader. Obama yearned to replicate the Reagan Revolution’s impact, although he repudiated its content.

Three decades after the Reagan Revolution began we still live in a Reaganized America. With debates about “Big Government” and tax cuts continuing, the Reagan Revolution remains unfinished. But it is one of twentieth-century America’s most significant political movements.

Gil Troy is a professor of history at McGill University in Montreal and author of The Reagan Revolution: A Very Short Introduction (2009), Leading from the Center: Why Moderates Make the Best Presidents (2008), and Morning in America: How Ronald Reagan Invented the 1980s (2005).