

9.1 Contextualizing Period 9:

Learning Objective 9.A: Explain the context in which the United States faced international and domestic challenges after 1980.

Conservative Movement

KC-9.1: 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.

- Movement had begun by _____ in 1964
- Reagan's elections brings conservative movement to power
 - Converts _____ Democrats
 - Reduces _____ - income, corporate, capital gains, estate
 - Cuts _____ spending, increases _____ spending
- _____ - "Traditional Stance"
 - Abortion, Affirmative Action, Same-Sex Marriage

Conservative Beliefs

KC-9.1.I: 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
 - _____ - background check and waiting period for gun sales
 - G.H.W. Bush passes Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) in 1990

21st Century

KC-9.2: Moving into the 21st century, the nation experienced significant technological, economic, and demographic changes.

- Technological Change
 - _____, smart phones, social media, machine learning (_____)
- Economic Change
 - Decline of _____ leads to different types of jobs
 - Growing wealth gap

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- _____ and Pandemic Recession
- Demographic Change
 - Movement to the _____ and _____
 - Immigration levels rise to pr-1920s levels again ~12% of population is foreign born

Technological Developments

KC-9.2.I: New developments in science and technology enhanced the economy and transformed society, while manufacturing decreased.

- Economy shifted to _____ and _____ economic activity
 - Jobs in _____ and _____ industries
 - Higher paying jobs require higher education - contributes to _____
- Manufacturing _____ due to outside competition
 - Cheaper to buy goods from abroad due to _____ and organizations like _____

Demographic Changes

KC-9.2.II: The U.S. population continued to undergo demographic shifts that had significant cultural and political consequences.

- Migration to South and West
 - Increases population → increase significance in _____
 - States with good climate, _____ business taxes
- Increased Immigration
 - Cultural _____, rise of new foods, language, _____
- Rise of Illegal Immigration
 - Division on how to handle incoming migrants
 - Political debates end with Executive Actions - _____, Trump Ban

End of the Cold War

KC-9.3: 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.

- First challenge to dismantle weapons - _____ (1991) and _____ (1993) treaties with Russia
- Iraq invasion of Kuwait (1990) Genocide in _____ (1995) and _____ (1999) prompt _____ US, NATO, UN action
- _____ in Afghanistan and _____, US leads but allies grow weary of

intervention

- US keeps leadership position in UN, NATO, _____

Foreign Policy

KC-9.3.I: The Reagan administration promoted an interventionist foreign policy that continued in later administrations, even after the end of the Cold War.

- 1983 Reagan props up pro-US Government in _____
- Sale of arms to _____ for Iran-Iraq war for helping free US hostages in Lebanon
- US sending aid to _____ in _____ to fight Marxist _____
 - 1985 Congress outlaws aid to Contras
- _____: 1986 Reagan administration uses profits from Iran arms sales to fund Contras

9/11 and Terrorism

KC-9.3.II: Following the attacks of September 11, 2001, U.S. foreign policy efforts focused on fighting terrorism around the world.

- War on Terror began in Afghanistan to overthrow _____ - harboring _____
 - Taliban retake Afghanistan after US exit in 2021
- Bush claimed _____ in Iraq was aiding terrorism and possessed WMDs
 - Loss of popular support for Iraqi gov't, _____ region seeks independence
- Unrest and power vacuum led to growth of _____/in Levant (ISIS/ISIL)
 - Renewed US presence in 2010s

Recap

- The Conservative movement came to power in 1980 with Reagan's election
- Conservatives generally wanted government's role to decrease
- Technological changes impacted the economy and demographic changes impacted culture and politics
- The US continued to be deeply involved in other countries as part of its Cold War policy and beyond
- The US had to find a new purpose in its foreign policy after the Cold War ended
- The War on Terror became a new foreign policy objective after the terrorist attacks of 9/11

Part II

Short Answer Questions

Answer the following in AT LEAST three sentences.

1. Explain the context in which the United States faced international and domestic challenges after 1980.

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? | |

1945 to the Present

Retrieved from: <http://ap.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/essays/1945-present?period=9>

Watergate inaugurated an era of malaise in America. A series of developments in the 1970s caused the American people to doubt that the nation could continue to reign, unchallenged, as ruler of the world. In 1973 and 1974, an OAPEC (Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries) embargo on oil sales highlighted America's dependence on Middle Eastern fuel, with mile-long gas lines forming in every major city. "Stagflation" became the byword for the American economy. For the first time, high unemployment went hand in hand with high inflation rates, both in double digits. As the economy foundered, so too did the nation's sense of well being and moral stability. Supreme Court decisions legalizing abortion (*Roe v. Wade*, 1973) and other rulings such as the outlawing of school prayer in the 1960s enraged millions of conservatives. When Americans were forced to flee Saigon in 1975, clinging to helicopters, it seemed a fitting symbol of the country's decline, economically, politically, militarily, and on issues of basic social values.

Jimmy Carter's election to the presidency in 1976 seemed like a partial answer. An unknown politician and a born-again Christian who told the American people they deserved a government as moral and as competent as its citizens, the former Georgia governor seemed ideally suited to restore a sense of stability to the nation. But Carter did not know how to deal with Congress. The energy crisis overwhelmed him. So too did inflation rates nearing 20 percent. Although he represented a breath of fresh air in foreign policy, especially in espousing democratic regimes in Africa and Latin America, Carter ultimately fell victim to one of the most humiliating defeats America had experienced—the seizure of the American embassy in Teheran, Iran, and the holding of more than sixty American hostages for over a year. Nothing more powerfully exemplified America's new sense of powerlessness.

Ronald Reagan was the "cowboy" who came riding in from the West to rescue America's sense of well being and pride. An actor, Reagan exuded leadership and strength. He operated on a simple creed: Capitalism was the only economic system that worked; people had to free themselves of the burdens of government—especially taxation—to manifest their creativity; no one should be allowed to challenge America militarily; and with these in hand, the nation would bounce back. Once again it would be "morning time in America." To a remarkable degree, Reagan delivered. He cut taxes, created new jobs, increased the military budget dramatically, called the Soviet Union an "evil empire," and won back the confidence of the people. Walter Mondale, the Democratic candidate for president in 1984, never stood a chance. Reagan swept forty-nine of the fifty states.

Yet Reagan's successes (and failures) were largely a product of the staff who served him. As long as James Baker was his chief of staff and Michael Deaver scripted his lines, Reagan's performance was impeccable. But when Baker swapped jobs with Donald Regan, Secretary of the Treasury, everything fell apart. Regan lacked the finesse of Baker. New National Security aides Oliver North and Admiral John Poindexter had Reagan sign off on the Iran-Contra affair—a scheme to have Israel sell US arms to Iran to free hostages and then use the profits to arm the "Contra" rebels in Nicaragua. Unfortunately, aiding the "Contras" was a direct violation of the Boland Amendment, a Congressional act that prohibited such aid. Reagan, never a "hands-on" president, was oblivious to the entire disaster. With poor staff, he blundered badly and, once more, it seemed that America was doomed to be afflicted with a failed chief executive.

Yet in the end, Reagan pulled off a miracle. At his wife Nancy's prompting, he had entered into intense negotiations with Mikhail Gorbachev, the leader of the Soviet Union. Unable to compete financially or militarily with Reagan's arms buildup, Gorbachev was ready for peace. He also recognized the futility of pursuing policies of Stalinist repression within his own country. As a result, Gorbachev and Reagan arrived at a dramatic arms control treaty and set the world on a path that signified the end of the Cold War. Returning from a triumphant final visit to Moscow, Reagan told the press that what he had just done was like being in a Cecil B. DeMille movie. It was, he said "the role of a lifetime."

Reagan's immediate successor—and his vice president—was George Herbert Walker Bush, a Yankee transplanted to Texas who had been a Congressman, ambassador to the United Nations and to China, and CIA director. Using his experience to brilliant effect, Bush presided masterfully over the end of the Cold War. To the astonishment of the world, the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 after twenty-eight years. Shortly

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thereafter, the Soviet Union itself fell apart, literally, with its constituent parts breaking away to form independent republics. Bush handled it all well, always careful to respect the sensibilities of other nations. Partly because of that skill, he shaped the most effective coalition of the post–Cold War world. Carefully putting together a military and political force of sixty-five nations under a United Nations mandate, Bush led a military drive, presided over by General Colin Powell, that removed Saddam Hussein and his Iraqi forces from the oil-rich nation of Kuwait in 1991. After “Operation Desert Storm,” Bush’s popularity rating soared to 91 percent.

Bush seemed tone deaf, however, when it came to responding to the economic recession that swept the country in 1991–1992. Due to Bush’s lack of creative response, a presidential contest that in early 1991 seemed hopeless for any Democrat suddenly became a toss-up. In the absence of other candidates—most of whom thought Bush was unbeatable—a young governor from Arkansas, William Jefferson Clinton, proved singularly adept at forging a political coalition consisting of the old New Deal Democrats and a group of new centrist Democrats who hued to the middle and loved the idea of a charismatic, bright leader.

Pivotal to Clinton-era politics was the partnership that existed between the President and First Lady Hillary Clinton. Not since Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt had there been such a political team. But unlike the Roosevelts, Bill and Hillary talked explicitly about a “co-presidency.” She was involved in decisions, at times taking the lead role. As a result, there was no single person in charge during the administration’s first two years.

In the end, the hallmark of Bill Clinton’s presidency was the deficit reduction package he passed in 1993, with increased taxes, reduced spending, and an expanded Earned Income Tax Credit for poor people. It passed by just one vote in the House, with Vice President Al Gore casting a tie-breaking vote in the Senate. The plan produced a surplus and a projected elimination of the national debt, while creating an economic climate that created a precedent-shattering twenty-two million jobs.

But the other main story of the first two years was a failed health care reform package, developed by a task force led by Hillary Clinton. In neither design nor execution did she display sensitivity to political realities. Indeed, so unpopular was the bill that it never even came to a Congressional vote. Moreover, disgust about the whole process led to a devastating defeat for the Democrats in 1994, led by Newt Gingrich, who moved forward with a conservative agenda—his “Contract with America”—that threatened to cut taxes, trim Medicare, and return to an age of laissez-faire economics.

But Clinton had not earned the label of being the “comeback kid” for nothing. During 1995–1996, he masterminded a brilliant campaign to make Gingrich look like a reactionary extremist. In 1995, in response to the devastating Oklahoma City terrorist bombing executed by right-wing militant Timothy McVeigh, Clinton drew the country together as its spiritual and political leader. He followed up with a series of modest legislative victories—V-chips for parents to monitor their kids’ television programming; 100,000 new police officers on the streets to halt crime; tax breaks for parents of students attending college; incentives for homeowners. Clinton even signed a bill on welfare reform that promised to “end welfare as we know it.” “The era of big government is over,” he declared. Perhaps most important, Clinton made Gingrich look reckless, and when Congress decided to shut the government down rather than pass Clinton’s budget, it was Gingrich, not Clinton, who looked like an irresponsible radical. Not surprisingly, Clinton soared to re-election in 1996 over Republican Robert Dole.

But Clinton could not avoid his personal demons. In the midst of the government shutdown, he had an affair with a twenty-two-year-old White House intern. When the information was raised by a Special Prosecutor investigating the Clintons for a real estate venture in Arkansas, Clinton chose to lie, under oath, about the affair. Soon there was another Congressional impeachment process underway, and Bill Clinton became the second president in history to be indicted by Congress and brought to trial before the United States Senate. (Nixon would have been the second, but he resigned.) In the end, Clinton survived. In the view of the Senate and of over 65 percent of the American people, the affair and his perjury was not the “high crime and misdemeanor” that the Founding Fathers had in mind when they created the impeachment clause. Nevertheless, Clinton largely undermined his second term in the White House and tarnished one of the most effective presidencies of postwar America.

In perhaps the most sensational and disputed election in American history, George W. Bush was elected president in 2000. Although he lost the popular vote to Al Gore by over 540,000 votes, he appeared to win the Electoral College. The state that proved decisive was Florida, with

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twenty-five electoral votes, although the election there was rife with voting scandals. In many areas, minorities had difficulty getting their votes counted. In Dade County, a “butterfly” ballot was printed that confused normally pro-Democratic voters. In the end, the Supreme Court, by a 5-4 vote in *Bush v. Gore*, decided to stop the recount before it was complete and to certify the existing results. Bush would be president. But Al Gore had partially brought the defeat on himself by refusing to run on the accomplishments of the Clinton-Gore administration and by distancing himself from Clinton—who still retained an approval rating of more than 60 percent as he left the White House.

The George W. Bush administration will be remembered forever because of the terrorist attacks by Osama bin Laden’s Al-Qaeda on September 11, 2001. Al-Qaeda conspirators hijacked four jumbo passenger jets. Two were flown into the 110-story twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. The towers collapsed, killing nearly 3,000 people. A third plane flew into the Pentagon. A fourth was headed for the White House when courageous passengers and crew stormed the cockpit and forced the plane to crash in the Pennsylvania countryside. It was a time of national shock parallel to that which occurred after the attacks on Pearl Harbor in 1941. Everyone was united, including allies around the globe.

But unlike the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, the American people were not asked to engage in common sacrifice. Instead of people paying more taxes for a strengthened military, tax rates were cut, especially for the rich and powerful. President Bush announced “the War on Terror,” a military campaign against Afghanistan, the home base of Osama bin Laden, with the approval of the American people. But then Bush, Vice President Richard Cheney, and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld refocused their attention on Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. With none of the coalition-building that his father had engaged in for “Desert Storm” in 1991, the younger Bush proceeded without UN sanction. The administration cited Clinton’s 1998 Iraq Liberation Act, which stated Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, to ensure Congressional authorization for the attack. The American invasion of Iraq was carried out with less than half the number of troops Colin Powell had gathered in 1991, as the war continued in Afghanistan. What followed was an eight-year civil war inside Iraq. Despite assiduous efforts, no weapons of mass destruction were found. Confused, angry, and frustrated, Americans returned to the tortured divisions of the Vietnam War era. Like that earlier war, the Iraq conflict polarized the country, except that this time, with no draft, volunteer soldiers paid the price through multiple tours of duty, while average Americans simply enjoyed their lower taxes.

Like John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan, and Bill Clinton before him, Barack Obama came to the presidency as a messenger of change, a leader who would restore America to its path as a leader among nations. The first black president, Obama rallied people who had never voted before with “Change we can believe in” and “Yes we can.” But although Obama achieved much of what he set out to accomplish—national health insurance (the first president in a hundred years to succeed), rigorous re-regulation of investment banking and Wall Street, a new arms control agreement, repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” to legalize the service of gay men and women in the Armed Forces—the recession Obama inherited from Bush would not go away. As a result, in 2010 the Democratic Party suffered a defeat in the Congressional elections parallel to that which Clinton suffered in 1994. America seemed caught in a never-ending pendulum of politics swinging from one side to the other.

Where it might end no one can predict. But every major theme of the past sixty years had its origins in World War II and its aftermath. The question is whether, as in World War II, America can find a new and shared sense of mission to carry it forward into the new millennium.

William H. Chafe is the Alice Mary Baldwin Professor of History at Duke University. His recent publications include Private Lives/Public Consequences: Personality and Politics in Modern America (2005) and The Rise and Fall of the American Century: The United States from 1890 to 2008 (2008).