

Period 9: 1980–Present Political and Foreign Policy Adjustments in a Globalized World

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TIMELINE

- 1976 Election of Jimmy Carter
- 1978 Panama Canal Treaty
Camp David Accords
- 1979 Three Mile Island nuclear accident
Formation of the Moral Majority
Soviet invasion of Afghanistan
Iranian students seize U.S. embassy; hold hostages for over a year
- 1980 United States boycotts Olympic games held in Moscow
Election of Ronald Reagan
- 1981 Release of American hostages held in Iran
Reagan fires striking air traffic controllers
- 1984 Reelection of Ronald Reagan
- 1985 Founding of the Democratic Leadership Council
- 1987 Iran-Contra hearings
- 1988 Election of George H. W. Bush
- 1989 Collapse of communism in Eastern Europe
- 1991 Operation Desert Storm
Collapse of the Soviet Union
- 1993 Fighting in Mogadishu, Somalia
Ratification of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)
- 1994 House Republicans issue the “Contract With America”
Both houses of Congress shift from Democratic to Republican control
- 1995 Peace treaty signed in Ohio between Serbian, Bosnian, and Croatian leaders
- 1998 Impeachment of President Clinton
- 1999 NATO Bombing of Serbia in response to violence in Kosovo
- 2001 Terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon

INTRODUCTION

The United States has had to adapt to a changing world in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The world of the recent past has been filled with challenges and possibilities. The United States has faced divisions along ideological and cultural lines at home and has had to adjust its foreign policy to changing global dynamics. The United States has also had to adapt to new technological and scientific advances, and to economic globalization.

The late twentieth century saw the growth of a powerful conservative movement. There had been signs of a growing conservative movement in the United States since the 1964 campaign of Barry Goldwater. This movement celebrated the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980 and has been successful in redefining the terms of political debate in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Recent decades have seen an intensification of partisan divisions—from the “Contract With America” in the 1990s to the Tea Party Movement in the wake of the election of the nation’s first African-American president, Barack Obama. The era has also seen a series of adjustments, in both domestic and foreign policy, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 2001.

KEY CONCEPT 9.1 THE RESURGENCE OF CONSERVATISM

A renewed conservative movement rose in importance and shaped political and cultural debates. This movement rejected liberal views on the role of the government and embraced traditional social values.

I. Factors in the Growth of the New Right

There are several factors that help explain the growth of the New Right at the end of the twentieth century. Notably, there was a marked decline in the public’s confidence and trust in the government. Also, these decades experienced a significant growth in Christian fundamentalism and the rise of neoconservative ideas in public discourse.

A. THE DECLINE OF PUBLIC TRUST IN THE 1970s

A series of events and trends in the 1970s—economic decline and dislocation, major political scandals, a sense of moral decay, and a perception of misguided foreign policy priorities—contributed to a decline in public trust and confidence in the government.

“Stagflation”

The economy of the United States had remained strong throughout the 1960s, despite the costs of the war in Vietnam. As the 1970s began, however, the economy began to contract. By the early 1970s, economists noted an unusual set of phenomena—both unemployment and inflation were at high levels (both over 6 percent). High unemployment is a sign of a stagnant economy; but high inflation is usually a sign of an active economy. After all, it is consumer demand that pushes prices up. The incidence of both occurring simultaneously was dubbed “stagflation.” Stagflation continued throughout the 1970s.

“Whip Inflation Now”

President Gerald Ford attempted to address the economic malaise of the 1970s, but his solutions struck the public as inadequate. Ford’s most public initiative was the promotion of the Whip Inflation Now (WIN) campaign. The campaign encouraged people to be more disciplined with their money. Supporters were encouraged to wear “WIN” buttons.

The OPEC Oil Embargo and the Energy Crisis of the 1970s

Starting with the OPEC oil embargo in 1973, fuel prices rose dramatically in the 1970s. America had to confront a stark reality—there are limits to the amount of fossil fuels, particularly petroleum, available in the world, and much of it comes from the volatile Middle East. Up until the 1970s, Americans assumed that petroleum was a cheap, inexhaustible commodity. The 1970s saw a dramatic spike in petroleum prices and long lines at gas pumps.

Nuclear Energy and Three Mile Island

Some Americans put faith in nuclear energy as an alternative to fossil fuels. Electricity is generated by the spinning of turbines. In power plants, steam spins the turbines. The problem is generating energy to boil water to produce steam. In a nuclear power plant, a nuclear reaction generates that energy, rather than the burning of coal or oil. The material needed for nuclear power, such as uranium, is relatively cheap and plentiful, and the reaction does not produce the greenhouse gas, carbon dioxide. However, there are problems associated with the nuclear power. The waste product of a nuclear reaction is radioactive and must be safely disposed of. Also, accidents can occur that can have devastating effects on the environment. The worst nuclear accident in world history was in Chernobyl, Ukraine (formerly part of the Soviet Union) in 1986. The worst accident in United States history occurred at the Three Mile Island power plant in Pennsylvania (1979). These accidents raised significant concerns among Americans about the safety of nuclear power and the government’s ability to effectively regulate it. Currently, nearly 20 percent of electricity is generated by nuclear power in the United States.

Foreign Policy “Failures” of the 1970s

President Jimmy Carter (1977–1981) faced a number of foreign policy challenges with mixed results. In one area, pursuing peace in the Middle East, Carter achieved a major victory. In regard to the Panama Canal Zone and the Iran hostage crisis (1979–1981), the results of Carter’s foreign policy were more mixed and provided an opening for Republicans to assert that Carter had left the United States in a weaker position.

The Camp David Accords (1978)

President Carter succeeded in providing a foundation for a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. The Camp David Accords are considered one of the few triumphs for President Carter’s troubled presidency. Since the founding of Israel in 1948, tensions have existed in the Middle East. The Arab nations refused to recognize Israel’s right to exist. Four wars occurred between Israel and its neighbors between 1948 and 1973. In 1977 Egyptian President Anwar Sadat broke with the other leaders of the Arab world and flew to Israel to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin. Negotiations ensued between the two leaders but they were unable to come up with a peace treaty. President Carter invited the two leaders to

the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland. The three men met for thirteen days and emerged with the basis for a peace treaty. The treaty resulted in an end to hostilities between Israel and Egypt, but tensions continued to exist between Israel and its other neighbors.

The Iran Hostage Crisis

In 1979, the U.S.-supported leader of Iran, Shah Pahlavi, was ousted by a revolution led by the Muslim religious leader, the Ayatollah Khomeini. The United States supported the Shah to the end. Later in 1979, when the United States admitted the deposed Shah to the United States for medical treatment, angry Iranian students took over the U.S. embassy and kept the personnel there hostage. Carter finally secured their release after the election in late 1980 but they were not actually released until thirty-three minutes into the administration of President Reagan in January 1981.

The Panama Canal (1977)

President Carter negotiated two treaties with Panama in 1977, the Torrijos-Carter Treaties, which turned the Panama Canal Zone over to Panama. One agreement, known as the Panama Canal Treaty, called for the United States to turn over control of the canal to Panama by December 31, 1999. The other agreement asserted that the canal shall remain neutral and open to shipping of all nations; if any country challenged this neutrality, the United States reserved the right to intervene. The treaties were ratified by the Senate in 1978. Many conservatives, notably Senators Strom Thurmond and Jesse Helms, were harshly critical of the treaty for surrendering direct control of a major strategic asset.

B. THE ANATOMY OF THE NEW RIGHT

The rapid growth of the Christian fundamentalist movement fueled the resurgence of the New Right. This fundamentalist movement started in churches but soon entered the political sphere, organizing opposition to liberal and social trends.

Competing Tendencies Within the New Right

The conservative movement has always had three distinct tendencies within it that have sometimes worked in unison and have sometimes been in conflict. First, there are Cold War conservatives, focused on containing or rolling back communist regimes abroad. In the post-Cold War era, interventionists have argued for continued U.S. actions abroad, notably in the Middle East. Second, are the economic conservatives. These conservatives argue for lower corporate taxes, deregulation, less government, and an economic atmosphere friendly to the priorities of big business. Economic conservatives might use the language of laissez-faire economics in regard to rolling back environmental regulations, but they are ready to use the power of the government to, say, extend military contracts to large corporations.

The third tendency within the conservative movement is the religious and cultural wing. It is this wing that has had the greatest grassroots support, fueling electoral victories for Ronald Reagan (twice), George H. W. Bush (once), and George W. Bush (twice). This movement gained steam as traditional-minded people grew frustrated with what they saw as the excesses of the counterculture of the 1960s. They railed against the women's liberation movement for challenging traditional gender roles, and the gay liberation movement. Many were

troubled by the assertiveness of African Americans in the 1960s, and pined for an early time, in which everyone “knew their place.” The public nature of drug-consumption in the 1960s also angered cultural conservatives.

Opposition to *Roe v. Wade*

The issue that propelled the cultural conservatives from the margins to prominence was abortion. In the wake of the 1973 decision, religious conservatives found their voice. The issue propelled evangelical Protestants to put aside their long-held suspicions of Catholicism, and create a broad Christian conservative movement.

The Moral Majority and Focus on the Family

The religious and cultural wing of the New Right found voice in several grassroots organizations. The Moral Majority was founded by the Reverend Jerry Falwell, a Southern Baptist pastor, in 1979. In the mid-1970s he embarked on a series of “I Love America” rallies. These rallies broke a traditional Baptist principle of separating religion from politics. Falwell asserted that this separation was at the heart of the moral decay that was afflicting America.

Focus on the Family was founded in 1977 by psychologist James Dobson. The organization is interdenominational, bridging the traditional divide between Catholics and Protestants. The organization promotes an abstinence-only approach to sexual education, the reintroduction of prayer into the schools, and reinforcement of traditional gender roles. The organization has stood against the expansion of rights for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people; it has been vocal in its opposition to same-sex marriage. The organization is one of the leading voices in the movement against abortion.

II. The Achievements and Limits of the Conservative Domestic Agenda

The conservative movement achieved electoral successes in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s and witnessed the implementation of some of its policy and political goals. However, this period also made evident the limits of conservative reform—many of the government programs it sought to curtail or eliminate enjoyed broad public support.

A. REFORM IN THE ECONOMIC REALM; RESISTANCE IN THE SOCIAL REALM

The New Right achieved remarkable victories in terms of lowering taxes and deregulating business. The movement was less successful in implementing its moral agenda, meeting inertia and resistance.

The New Right and the Election of Ronald Reagan

The New Right achieved a remarkable victory in the nomination and election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. Reagan had been a well-known actor in B-movies from the 1930s to the 1960s. He was president of the Screen Actors Guild in the 1940s and 1950s. He became increasingly interested in politics, first as a New Deal Democrat. By the 1950s, he became increasingly anticommunist, and became an active Republican in the 1960s. He served as governor of California from 1967 to 1975.

The election of the conservative Ronald Reagan in 1980 has been seen by many historians as a repudiation of the political and social movements of the 1960s. Reagan's victory can, in part, be attributed to more immediate causes. President Jimmy Carter was seen as ineffective in not securing the quick release of hostages held at the American embassy in Tehran by Iranian militants. However, Reagan projected a sense of hope and optimism that promised to move the United States beyond the scandals and doubts of the 1970s. He promised a new "morning in America," and Americans listened. Reagan's tenure as president saw a tremendous military build-up and the beginning of the end for the Soviet Union and the communist bloc. He also gave voice to the rising New Right movement.

Reaganomics

President Reagan advanced a series of economic initiatives that bear the name "Reaganomics." He was not the first conservative politician to advance such policies—Reaganomics bears a striking similarity to Herbert Hoover's approach to the Great Depression. Reagan supported economic policies that favored big business. He based this on a belief in supply-side economics. This approach to the economy stressed stimulating the supply side of the economy—manufacturing firms, banks, insurance corporations. The idea is that if there is growth in the supply side, there will be general economic growth and the benefits of that growth will reach everyone. The alternative approach is to stimulate the demand side—consumers. Demand side economics would emphasize government policies designed to increase workers' wages and expand social programs such as welfare and unemployment benefits. As a believer in supply-side economics, Reagan implemented policies that he thought would stimulate business. Reagan cut taxes for corporations and greatly reduced regulations on industry. Reagan was a staunch proponent of deregulation. He and his secretary of the interior James Watt were criticized by environmental advocates for dismantling or weakening much of the environmental legislation of the 1970s.

HOOVER AND REAGAN

Be familiar with the similarities between Presidents Reagan and Hoover in regard to economics. Both promoted a supply-side approach to economic policy.

"Contract with America" (1994)

The Republican Party made significant gains in both the House of Representatives and the Senate in the midterm elections of 1994. The opposition party traditionally does well in the congressional elections that occur between presidential elections. In this case, the Republican Party gained control of both the House and the Senate. The Republicans had not controlled the House since 1954. House Republicans, led by minority leader Newt Gingrich, had signed and publicly issued the Contract with America six weeks before the 1994 election. It was a call to arms for Republicans and a specific blueprint for legislative action. The document called for action on a number of fronts, such as tougher anti-crime measures, tort reform, and welfare reform. Many of the House's initiatives died in the Senate, some were vetoed by President Bill Clinton, some were implemented, and some were reworked by both parties before being implemented. The success of the Republican Party in 1994 put President Clinton on the defensive in regard to his dealings with Congress.

Impeachment Proceedings

An important turning point in the deterioration of relations between the two main political parties was the impeachment proceedings against President Bill Clinton. The proceedings demonstrated the growing strength of the more conservative elements within the Republican Party. Republicans doggedly pursued evidence of scandal relating to President Clinton. During his first term, Kenneth Starr was appointed as an independent council to investigate the Clintons' participation in a failed and fraudulent real estate project in Arkansas that dated back to 1978, when Bill Clinton was governor. Starr pursued the Whitewater case relentlessly, but never tied the Clintons to the fraud.

President Clinton, however, was not able to avoid implication in a more salacious scandal. Clinton was publicly accused of having a sexual affair with a White House intern named Monica Lewinsky. Clinton denied the accusations publicly and also before a federal grand jury. When Clinton was later forced to admit the affair, Congressional Republicans felt they had evidence of impeachable crimes—lying to a grand jury and obstructing justice. Clinton was impeached by the House of Representatives in 1998. Impeachment is the act of bringing charges against a federal official; it is parallel to indictment in the criminal court system. After impeachment by the House, the Senate conducts a trial, based on the charges listed in the “articles of impeachment.” Clinton was found “not guilty” by the Senate (two-thirds are needed for conviction). The entire incident reflected the tense relationship between the two major political parties. Clinton emerged from the affair largely unscathed. Many Americans disapproved of his personal misconduct, but resented the attempt by Republicans to remove him from office.

IMPEACHMENT

Impeachment is not synonymous with removal from office. Impeachment is the act of bringing charges against the president (or other federal official). It is parallel to indictment in the criminal court system. After impeachment by the House, the Senate conducts a trial, based on the charges listed in the “articles of impeachment.” If found guilty of these charges, the president is removed from office.

The Presidency of George W. Bush

The New Right achieved a major victory with the election of George W. Bush in 2000. Bush, the son of the forty-first president, George H. W. Bush, was governor of Texas and had little national exposure. He ushered the country through the aftermath of one of the most tumultuous events on American soil since the Civil War—the terrorist attacks of 2001 (see page 313). By the end of his second term, public approval of his presidency was at an historic low, hampering the chances of the Republicans to hold on to the White House.

The Election of 2000

The 2000 election for president reflected political divisions in the United States and was one of the most contentious elections in American history. The voting in Florida was split almost evenly between the Democratic candidate, Vice President Al Gore, and Republican candidate George W. Bush. This would not have been such a problem beyond Florida, but, based on the electoral votes of the other 49 states, neither candidate had 270 electoral votes, the number needed to be declared the winner. After several weeks of legal wrangling in Florida, the U.S.

Supreme Court reversed an order by the Florida Supreme Court to do a hand recount of several counties in Florida. The decision by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Bush v. Gore* ended the dispute, with Bush slightly ahead of Gore in Florida, securing the presidency for Bush.

A DIVIDED COURT

The Supreme Court has been fairly evenly divided between its liberal wing and its conservative wing. Justice David Souter could have solidified a conservative court that would have overturned *Roe v. Wade*. Unfortunately, for conservatives, Souter joined the liberal wing of the Court despite the fact that he was chosen by a Republican president.

“No Child Left Behind”

The No Child Left Behind Act was signed into law in 2002 by President George W. Bush. As a program designed to reform public education, the law extended the reach of the federal government into education—traditionally a state responsibility. The law mandated that states set learning standards, that students attain “proficiency” in reading and math by 2014, and that teachers be “highly qualified” in the subject area. The law allowed students to transfer to other schools if they were attending a school that fell short of meeting new guidelines. The law also allowed the state to take over schools and school districts that did not meet new guidelines. The program was criticized by many states for its lack of funding to help schools reach these new goals. Also, many educators questioned the increased reliance on standardized exams in judging schools and school districts.

The Tea Party Movement and the Reaction to the Election of President Obama

The election of 2008 resulted in a profound milestone in American history—the election of the first African American to the presidency. Such an event was virtually unthinkable a generation earlier. As late as the 1960s, Jim Crow segregation was still the law of the land throughout the South and informal, de facto, segregation existed throughout the nation. The civil rights movement challenged and altered many of these practices, but racist attitudes persisted among large segments of the population.

Barack Obama’s victory was the result of a series of factors. First, his campaign successfully held off a strong challenge to the Democratic nomination by Senator Hillary Clinton. Clinton’s bid for the nomination, if successful, could have resulted in a different historic milestone—the first female president in the United States. The Obama campaign was able to harness the power of the Internet, as well as the candidate’s abundant charisma, to build a large base. Clinton subsequently threw her support behind the Obama campaign in the general election. She was later named secretary of state.

In the general election, the Democratic Party was aided by an unpopular sitting Republican president, George W. Bush, and by an unfocused campaign by Republican Senator John McCain. The McCain campaign failed to articulate a consistent message. McCain’s selection of the relatively unknown candidate, Sarah Palin, for vice president failed to propel the campaign forward. Palin energized the more conservative elements of the Republican Party, but failed to broaden the party’s appeal.

The election of President Obama has generated a vocal opposition movement known as the Tea Party, harkening back to the American colonists’ action against perceived British

tyranny. To some extent the movement is a creation of the media—heavily promoted by the Fox News channel, and to some extent it represents a grassroots sense of discontent with big government. The movement often exhibits hyperbolic language, predicting the onset of “tyranny,” “fascism,” and “communism.”

B. REDUCING “BIG GOVERNMENT”: RHETORIC AND REALITY

Republicans repeatedly declared the era of “big government” was coming to an end. However, Republican administrations witnessed an increase in the size and scope of the government, as it became evident that eliminating or reducing popular programs would be politically dangerous.

The Expansion of Medicare and Medicaid

Since the creation of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965, as part of President Lyndon Johnson's “Great Society” (see Period 8), both programs have expanded. Medicare provides health insurance to those over sixty-five, who have worked and paid into the system, and to those with disabilities. Medicaid is a government insurance program for low-income people. Both programs have, over the years, added conditions and situations that would qualify for coverage. In addition, as people live longer—the “graying of America”—the costs to the Medicare program increase. Despite Reagan's promise's to end “big government,” he led the effort to pass a Social Security reform bill designed to ensure the long-term solvency of the program and supported the expansion of the Medicare program to protect the elderly and disabled against “catastrophic” health costs.

Growth of the Federal Deficit

President Reagan's pro-business economic policies had mixed results. By cutting corporate taxes and taxes on wealthy individuals he cut government revenues. But, at the same time, he increased spending on armaments. This combination of increased spending and decreased revenues led to a doubling of the national debt from around \$900 billion in 1980 to over \$2 trillion in 1986. A large debt is a problem because it requires large interest payments. By 1988, the interest on the national debt had reached 14 percent of total annual government expenditures. This huge debt has hindered economic growth to some degree since and forced future administrations to make difficult decisions in regard to keeping the debt under control.

KEY CONCEPT 9.2

THE END OF THE COLD WAR AND THE REDEFINITION OF FOREIGN POLICY GOALS

The United States redefined its role in the world in the 1990s and 2000s and had to redefine its foreign policy as well. This change was a response to the ending of the Cold War and growing importance of global terrorism.

I. The End of the Cold War

President Reagan had gained prominence earlier in his career as a strong anticommunist. He brought this rhetoric to the White House, and pursued an aggressive anticommunist agenda. His interventionist approach to foreign policy set the tone for the following administrations.

A. A WORSENING OF UNITED STATES-SOVIET RELATIONS IN THE LATE 1970s AND EARLY 1980s

Relations between the Soviet Union and the United States, which had been improving since Nixon's détente overtures earlier in the 1970s, soured after the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan (1979). President Carter suspended grain sales to the Soviet Union in protest of the Soviet invasion. He also pushed for a U.S. boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow.

Increased Military Spending

President Reagan was determined to challenge the Soviet "evil empire." He initiated several weapons programs, vowing to close what he called a "window of vulnerability"—the ability of Soviet missiles to attack and decimate American missile locations before the United States could adequately respond. He began research on the Strategic Defense Initiative, dubbed "Star Wars" by critics, and initiated the costly MX missile program.

The Fall of the Soviet Union and the Collapse of Communism

President Reagan is often given credit for precipitating the fall of the Eastern bloc. In 1989, communist governments began to collapse in Eastern Europe. It was clear that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev would not try to halt this development as previous Soviet leaders had. The iconic image of this movement was the collapse of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. The wall, separating West Berlin from East Berlin, had become a symbol of the rift between the Communist bloc countries and the Western democratic countries. By 1991, the Soviet Union itself had collapsed, ending communism in Europe. It is true that an accelerated arms race taxed the Soviet economy more than it did the American economy, but one must also look at the internal dynamics of Soviet society to understand this major development.

B. THE UNITED STATES AND THE WORLD, FROM REAGAN INTO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

In the post-Vietnam War years, debates ensued about the proper role of the United States in the world. These debates continued into the post-Cold War world, as the United States engaged in a host of military and peacekeeping interventions.

The Reagan Doctrine

The Reagan administration supported regimes that were anticommunist, even if they were undemocratic, or even repressive. This foreign policy came to be known as the Reagan Doctrine. Reagan sent troops to the island of Grenada in 1983 to topple the Marxist leaders of the country. Reagan continued to support the dictatorial regime of the Philippines led by Ferdinand Marcos despite reports of electoral fraud. The regime was finally toppled in 1986, with Corazon Aquino replacing Marcos.

Central America and the Iran-Contra Scandal

As part of the Reagan Doctrine, the Reagan administration consistently tried to undermine the left-wing Sandinista government in Nicaragua. The Sandinistas took power in 1979, after toppling the United States-backed dictatorship of Anastasio Somoza. The United States funded and trained an anti-Sandinista military group known as the Contras. In 1982, Con-

gress, alarmed at reports of human rights abuses by the Contras, passed the Boland Amendment, to halt U.S. aid to the group.

Congressional action did not deter members of the Reagan administration from funding the Contras. An elaborate scheme was developed by members of the administration to secretly sell weapons to Iran and use funds from these sales to fund the Contras. In 1986, details of the Iran-Contra affair became public. Ultimately fourteen members of the Reagan administration were tried for violating U.S. law, and eleven were convicted. Among the convicted was Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger. Oliver North of the National Security Council, an architect of the program, was also initially convicted, but the convictions were overturned on appeal. Reagan himself claimed to not have direct knowledge of the program. Critics labeled him the "Teflon president," because accusations of wrongdoing did not stick to him.

President George Bush and the Persian Gulf War

President George H. W. Bush's main accomplishments were in the field of foreign affairs. It was during Bush's presidency that the Berlin Wall came down and the Soviet Union collapsed. After Iraq, under the leadership of Saddam Hussein, invaded neighboring Kuwait in an attempt to gain more control over the region's oil reserves, President Bush organized a United Nations military coalition to challenge the move. The Persian Gulf War involved Operation Desert Storm successfully removing Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1991. During the Persian Gulf War significant numbers of women served in combat roles for the first time.

Chaos in Somalia

President Bill Clinton deployed U.S. forces to aid a United Nations humanitarian mission in Somalia in 1993. Troubles in Somalia began earlier, in 1991, after the government was toppled and fighting broke out between competing factions. The fighting in Somalia resulted in widespread famine, with more than half a million people dying. The United Nations took the initiative to deliver food to Somalia, but much of it was stolen by the warring factions and sold for weapons. In December 1992, President Bush had approved the use of United States troops to aid U.N. relief activities. By 1993, these U.S. troops had come under attack, resulting in intense fighting in the capital, Mogadishu. American forces suffered nineteen deaths. The mission soon ended.

Democracy in Haiti

President Clinton took the lead in insuring a transition to democracy in Haiti in 1994. After decades of dictatorship, a democratic election brought Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power in 1990. Subsequently, a Haitian army general ousted him. Clinton announced American intentions to use force, if necessary, to return Aristide to power. The United Nations authorized such a move, but former President Jimmy Carter was dispatched to Haiti to try to negotiate an end to military rule. He was successful, and Aristide returned to power in 1995.

Intervention in the Former Yugoslavia

The Clinton administration, like previous Democratic administrations, set out broad domestic reform goals but became enmeshed in foreign policy matters. Clinton became increasingly concerned about violence in the former Yugoslavia. Under communism, Yugoslavia had been a patchwork of different ethnicities. After communism fell in 1989, the country

split into several smaller nations. Ethnic violence developed as Serbian forces attempted to gain control of areas of Bosnia with large Serbian populations. In the process, Serbian forces initiated a campaign to remove Bosnians, by force if necessary, from these areas. This “ethnic cleansing” campaign resulted in atrocities against the civilian population and became a focus of concern in the media and among foreign countries. The United States and other countries decided to take action as reports of Serbian brutality became known. President Clinton brought leaders from Bosnia, Serbia, and Croatia together in 1995 in Dayton, Ohio. A peace treaty, known as the Dayton Agreement, was signed and 60,000 NATO troops were dispatched to enforce it.

The United States again became concerned about violence in the region in 1998 when reports emerged of Serbian attacks against ethnic Albanians in the Serbian province of Kosovo. President Clinton approved the use of U.S. forces, under NATO auspices, to engage in a bombing campaign against Serbia in 1999.

Clinton and the Conflict in the Middle East

Toward the end of his second term, Clinton put a great deal of effort in attempting to broker a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. Since the founding of Israel in 1948, tensions have existed in the Middle East. The Arab nations refused to recognize Israel’s right to exist. Four wars occurred between Israel and its neighbors between 1948 and 1973. Since the Six-Day War in 1967, Israel has occupied adjacent lands where large numbers of Palestinians live. These lands currently include the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and eastern Jerusalem. Palestinians have insisted that these lands should comprise a Palestinian state. Israel has resisted agreeing to the formation of a Palestinian state as long as Palestinians launch attacks on Israel. The continued growth of Jewish settlements in the West Bank complicates the situation. In 2000, President Clinton invited Palestinian leaders Yasser Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak to Camp David. The goal was to work out a “final status settlement” to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The discussions at Camp David in 2000 did not resolve the conflict, which still remains unresolved.

President George W. Bush and the Withdrawal from the International Community

The debate over the role of the United States in the world continued during the administration of President George W. Bush. Although President Bush worked with a coalition of nations in the invasion of Iraq in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 2001 (see page 313), he distrusted many of the multilateral entities that the United States had previously participated in. Bush withdrew the United States from the Kyoto Protocol, an international agreement on environmental goals. Also, the administration violated international guidelines about the treatment of military prisoners. Bush withdrew from the Anti-ballistic Missile Treaty, in effect since 1972, in late 2001 so that the United States could develop a space-based missile-defense system. In 2002, the United States withdrew from the treaty creating the United Nations’ International Criminal Court, which went into effect later that year.

The Bush Doctrine

Debates about military interventions continued during the presidency of George W. Bush. These debates took on added urgency in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 2001. President Bush shifted American foreign policy away from its traditional reliance on

deterrence and containment. Bush put forth a more aggressive approach in the fall of 2002 that called for preemptive strikes against nations perceived as threats to the United States. In a speech at West Point, Bush identified an “axis of evil” consisting of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. This reliance on preemptive warfare is known as the Bush Doctrine.

President Obama and the Muslim World

President Obama has taken a variety of steps in regard to the Muslim world. Soon after coming into office, Obama made a major speech in Cairo, Egypt, pledging to mend relations with the Muslim world. He has committed additional forces to Afghanistan while beginning a withdrawal of troops from Iraq. During the 2008 campaign, Obama repeatedly pledged to commit United States forces to finding and killing Osama Bin Laden. That pledge was fulfilled in the spring of 2011.

In 2011, Obama spoke favorably of the changes brought about by the “Arab Spring” protests in the Middle East and North Africa. He committed United States forces, working with European allies, to challenge forces loyal to Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi. Qaddafi was ousted and killed in 2011.

II. The United States in the Age of Global Terrorism

The terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001 caused the United States to focus its foreign policy on the war on terrorism. The actions taken by the United States, both at home and abroad, have generated debate about security and civil liberties.

A. THE TERRORIST ATTACKS OF 2001 AND THE UNITED STATES RESPONSE

Following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, a series of foreign policy and military initiatives began aimed at preventing future terrorist attacks. These initiatives included prolonged and controversial military campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Terrorist Attacks Against the United States

On the morning of September 11, 2001, nineteen terrorists working with the al-Qaeda network hijacked four domestic airplanes. The idea was to turn the airplanes into missiles that would destroy symbols of American power. One plane was flown into the Pentagon, inflicting heavy damage, and one plane crashed in a field after the hijackers were overtaken by passengers. The other two airplanes did the most damage, crashing into the two towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. The damage inflicted on each building weakened their structures so that both buildings collapsed within two hours. Approximately 3,000 people died in the four incidents, the vast majority of the deaths occurring at the World Trade Center.

War with Iraq

The terrorist attacks of 2001 were soon followed by President Bush initiating military action on two fronts—Iraq and Afghanistan. Operation Iraqi Freedom, begun in 2003, was the attempt by the United States to remove Saddam Hussein from office and create a less belligerent and more democratic government in Iraq. President Bush insisted that Hussein was developing weapons of mass destruction that could be used against the United States and its allies. U.S. forces failed to find evidence of such weapons. The administration also suggested that there was a connection between Hussein and the terrorist attacks of 2001. No evidence of

such a link has been uncovered, and the administration moved away from that rationale. This operation proved to be more difficult and costly than Operation Desert Storm. Defeating the Iraqi army and removing Saddam Hussein from office was relatively easy. After these goals were accomplished, President Bush declared “mission accomplished” in May 2003. However, creating stability in Iraq proved to be an elusive goal for the Bush administration. Attacks by insurgents continued, both against U.S. forces and between different factions within Iraq. Operation Iraqi Freedom hurt President Bush’s approval ratings in the United States and created tension between the United States and some European nations.

War in Afghanistan

The United States also initiated military actions in Afghanistan in 2001, less than a month after the September 11 terrorist attacks. American forces overthrew the Taliban, the government that had given refuge to al-Qaeda. The United States hoped to find the leader of al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, who was still at large at the end of President Bush’s presidency.

B. LIBERTY, SECURITY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM

The war on terrorism has fostered a series of intense debates among the American people about the proper methods of carrying out a global war on terrorism. Many Americans became increasingly concerned about issues of human rights and civil liberties in this campaign against terrorism.

The Patriot Act

The Patriot Act was passed in 2001, six weeks after the September 11 terrorist attacks. It greatly expanded the government’s authority in the fight against terrorism. Some critics have said that it impinges on people’s civil liberties. Perhaps one of the biggest controversies around the Patriot Act is the use of National Security Letters, or NSLs, by the FBI. These NSLs allow the FBI to search telephone, e-mail, and financial records without a court order, raising constitutional concerns for many people.

Department of Homeland Security

The creation of the Department of Homeland Security was a result of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. It was created in 2003, absorbing the Immigration and Naturalization Service. It is a cabinet level department, with the responsibility of protecting the United States from terrorist attacks and natural disasters.

Tactics in the War on Terrorism

In 2004, the release of photographs of United States Army personnel humiliating and, apparently, abusing prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq cast light on new tactics used by the United States in its handling of prisoners in the aftermath of the 2001 terrorist attacks. Army personnel at detention camps in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, were given permission to use “enhanced interrogation” techniques. Critics said that these techniques, which include “waterboarding,” amounted to torture. The government also began to hold suspects at these facilities indefinitely, denying them due process rights. The Supreme Court, in *Hamdan v. Rumsfeld* (2006), ruled that the Bush administration could not hold detainees indefinitely without due process and without the protection of the Geneva Accords.

President Obama and the War on Terrorism

Some of the concerns about the way the war on terrorism was being carried out under the administration of President George W. Bush helped elevate Barack Obama to the White House in 2008, over Republican John McCain. In 2011, the Obama administration was able to report that a Navy “SEAL Team Six” had killed Osama bin Laden. However, to the disappointment of many of Obama’s supporters in 2008, President Obama has continued many of the controversial antiterrorism policies begun during the Bush administration and has pursued some new programs. The Patriot Act, for instance, is still in effect. In 2011, Obama allowed for the extension of three controversial measures within the Patriot Act that were set to expire. During the election campaign in 2008, he called the reports of prisoner abuse at the Guantanamo Bay detention camp “a sad chapter in American history” and promised to close it down by 2009. As of 2014, he has not closed it down.

In addition, President Obama has generated a great deal of debate over the increased use of unmanned drone attacks on suspected terrorist targets. The program, begun under President George W. Bush, has been greatly expanded under the Obama administration, despite it being criticized as “extrajudicial killings,” and “summary justice” by the United Nations. Finally, President Obama renewed a clandestine program known as PRISM, which allows the National Security Agency to conduct mass data mining of phone, Internet, and other communications—including, under certain circumstances, those of United States citizens. The clandestine program was exposed by a computer specialist and former NSA contractor, Edward Snowden, in 2013. The revelations revived the ongoing debate among Americans around the protection of civil liberties in the age of global terrorism.

KEY CONCEPT 9.3 CHALLENGES FACING THE UNITED STATES AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

At the turn of the twenty-first century, the United States faced a series of challenges related to a variety of social, economic, and demographic changes.

I. The United States, the Global Economy, and Public Policy

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century the United States moved toward greater integration into the world economy. This move toward increased participation in globalization has been accompanied by economic instability and a series of challenges around ecological and social change, and around public policy.

A. THE PERSISTENCE OF ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

At the close of the twentieth century, the gap between the wealthy and the rest of the population widened in the United States. Workers in the United States experienced stagnation in terms of real wages as union membership declined and manufacturing jobs were eliminated.

The Growth of the Income Gap

Since the 1970s, economists have noted that the income gap between the wealthy and the middle class has grown increasingly wide. The income for the top earning 1 percent of households increased by about 275 percent between 1979 and 2007, while the middle 60 percent of wage-earners saw their income rise by just under 40 percent during the same period. The

flattening of wages for the middle class and the poor has meant an increase in debt for many Americans and, for many population groups, a decrease in consumer spending.

The Deindustrialization of America

From the 1960s onward, large numbers of factories in northeastern cities such as New York and Philadelphia, as well as Midwestern “rust belt” cities such as Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, and Chicago, have closed. Some firms have relocated to the South and other areas within the United States where they can take advantage of lower wage expectations and a weak labor movement. Since the 1980s, there has been a rapid shift of the manufacturing sector from the United States and other developed countries to the less developed parts of the world. Free trade agreements have accelerated this trend. The rise of the private manufacturing sector in communist China has also played a major role. Because firms in China are able to produce goods at lower costs—because of considerably lower labor costs and an exchange rate that is favorable to China—the United States imports from China grew dramatically in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. In 2012, the United States trade deficit with China was \$315 billion.

Decline of Union Membership

The decline of manufacturing jobs in the United States has contributed to a drop in union membership. Union membership (as a percentage of the total workforce) peaked in the United States in 1954 at 35 percent; currently it is about 12 percent. Another contributing factor in the decline of unionized workers was the ability of the New Right to press an agenda that values deregulation and free market economics. A major turning point in government policy toward unionized workers came in 1981 under President Reagan. When air traffic controllers went on strike in 1981, he had them all fired. This action broke their union, the Professional Air Traffic Controllers’ Organization, and was consistent with helping the supply side (the airline industry), rather than the demand side (the unionized air traffic controllers). The destruction of PATCO was a major blow to organized labor in the late twentieth century. In such an environment, and with a falling membership, there has been a marked decline in the militancy of the union movement. In 1970, there were more than 380 major strikes or lockouts in the United States; by 1980, that figure dropped to under 200. In 2010, there were 11 major strikes or lockouts.

B. DEBATES AROUND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

A number of heated policy debates have occurred during the period from 1980 to the present in regard to the role of government, regulation of the financial system, and international trade.

NAFTA and the Push Toward Free Trade

A heated debate occurred in the 1990s over free trade and the globalization of the world economy. President Bill Clinton broke with organized labor and environmental groups by embracing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). NAFTA, ratified by Congress in 1993, eliminated all trade barriers and tariffs among the United States, Canada, and Mexico. NAFTA was the subject of much controversy when it was promoted by President Clinton. Free trade supporters promised global prosperity as more nations participated in the global economy. Opponents worried that nations would no longer be able to implement environmental regula-

tions, ensure workers rights, or protect fledging industries from foreign competition. Clinton's championing of NAFTA represents a conscious decision by Clinton to try to move the Democratic Party away from its liberal traditions and toward a more centrist approach.

CLINTON MOVES RIGHT

Clinton frustrated Republicans, especially his opponent in the 1996 election, Bob Dole, by moving in a rightward direction. His embrace of NAFTA and welfare reform stole Republican thunder and assured his reelection.

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)

The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade has existed since 1948 but a controversial 1994 agreement was far-reaching in its commitment to free trade. The 1994 GATT agreement called into being the World Trade Organization (1995), which has served as a global trade referee committed to reducing barriers to trade. The issues of globalization and free trade have inspired vocal protests.

Opponents of the World Trade Organization have noted that the wealthy countries of the world have benefitted from new trade rules far more than the developing countries have. Some cite the inclusion of intellectual property in WTO rules as damaging to the developing world. The Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) (1994), critics argue, made it more difficult for developing countries to gain access to new medicines and technologies. Subsequent WTO talks at Doha, Qatar (2001), called for a loosening of patent regulations so that developing countries could gain access to essential medicines.

Challenges to Globalization

President Clinton's embrace of NAFTA was part of a broader push toward the removal of trade barriers. Proponents of globalization argue that the elimination of trade barriers will lower prices of products and stimulate the global economy. However, the movement toward free trade has generated much debate. Labor organizations argue that eliminating trade barriers will lead to the loss of American manufacturing jobs as jobs gravitate toward countries where the going wages are the lowest. Also, environmentalists worry that free trade treaties will prevent the participating countries from enacting strong environmental protections. These opponents came together in Seattle, Washington, in November 1999 to protest at a meeting of the World Trade Organization, an international body charged with reducing trade barriers.

Changes in the Welfare System

In 1996, Bill Clinton adopted one of the planks of the Republican "Contract with America" by ending welfare as a federal program and shifting its administration to the state level. Clinton's embrace of welfare reform shocked many liberal Democrats. The Democratic Party had pushed for federal entitlement programs since the New Deal of President Roosevelt in the 1930s. Clinton perceived that many Americans were growing weary of programs that cost taxpayers money and did not seem to lessen poverty. Some Americans argued that welfare fostered a sense of dependency among recipients of welfare payments and stifled individual initiative. The reform required welfare recipients to begin work after two years—a stipulation known as "workfare."

Toward Health Care Reform

One of President Bill Clinton's first major domestic policy initiatives was reform of the country's health care system. Clinton put forth the idea of a federal health insurance plan that would provide subsidized insurance to many of the 39 million uncovered Americans, and would, according to the plan, bring down health insurance costs for everyone. The president's wife, Hillary Clinton, chaired a task force on the issue. The idea of a federal health insurance plan had been proposed as early as the 1930s. It came to the fore again in the late-twentieth century as health care costs spiraled out of control and more and more people could not afford insurance. The plan was vigorously opposed by the pharmaceutical and insurance industries, and was ultimately shot down by a Republican filibuster in the Senate.

President Obama and Health Care Reform

Like President Clinton, President Barack Obama chose health care reform as one of his first major domestic initiatives. The issues that motivated Clinton in 1993—spiraling health care costs, large numbers of uninsured Americans—had become more pronounced in the ensuing years. Proposals for creating a “public option” in regard to health insurance generated enthusiasm among many Democrats, but fierce opposition from the pharmaceutical and insurance industries, and from the Republican Party. Many Republicans likened such a proposal to “socialism.” In 2009, both houses of Congress passed versions of health care reform. In early 2010, a special election to fill the late Senator Edward Kennedy's seat was won by a Republican, ending the Democrats' sixty-seat filibuster-proof majority in the Senate. Democrats were able to pass a watered-down version of health care reform in March 2010.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act was challenged in several federal courts. Three upheld the act; two deemed provisions of it unconstitutional. Finally, in 2012, the Supreme Court upheld the major aspects of the Affordable Care Act; specifically, it upheld the constitutionality of the act's individual mandate as an exercise of Congress's taxing power. Still, the act has faced both legal and political challenges, even as Americans have begun participating in the health insurance exchanges established by the act.

Debates over Social Security Reform

With the percentage of Americans over the age of sixty-five growing, there will, by 2030, be a substantial increase in the number of people receiving Social Security. The “graying of America,” and its impact on the Social Security system, has been a concern of politicians recently. One reason for the growing percentage of senior citizens is the large number of “baby boomers,” born in the period after World War II, reaching retirement age. When such a large percentage of the American public is retired, many people worry that programs extending benefits to the elderly, notably Medicare and Social Security, will be unable to stay financially solvent. The issue of reforming the Social Security system has divided Democrats and Republicans, with Republicans pushing for some degree of privatization of the program, and Democrats pushing for increased funding streams to ensure its viability in the future. President George W. Bush, for example, pushed unsuccessfully for a combination of a government-funded program and personal accounts.

Reform of the Financial Sector

Heated debates have occurred from the 1980s to the present about the role of the government in regard to regulating the United States financial system. Republicans have generally

argued for deregulation of major industries, including financial firms, and have resisted calls for increased government oversight. Republicans have argued that excessive regulation impedes risk-taking, competition, and economic growth. Democrats, on the other hand, argue that regulation is necessary to check reckless behavior on the part of the financial industry and to protect the economy from rapid fluctuations that can result from crises in the financial sector.

The Savings and Loan Crisis and Bailout

The issue of deregulation of the financial sector came into stark relief in the 1980s with the near collapse of the savings and loan industry. In the 1980s, the nation's savings and loans associations suffered from a spate of irresponsible and risky investments and a downturn in the housing market. Their situation was made worse by the deregulation of the industry in 1980. Legislation widened the options for S&Ls to invest their financial holdings, paving the way for riskier speculative investments. By 1989, more than 700 S&Ls had become insolvent. In response to this crisis, President George H. W. Bush signed a bailout bill that extended billions of dollars to the industry. Taxpayers ultimately paid more than \$120 billion for the bailout. Some economists believe that the bailout of the S&L industry created a moral hazard for other lenders—that is, it created a situation in which actors are more willing to take risks knowing that the potential costs of such risks will be borne by others. Thus, these economists see a connection between the S&L crisis and the subprime mortgage crisis of 2007.

C. ENERGY POLICY, CONSUMPTION, AND THE LIMITS TO GROWTH

A series of developments have generated debates in the United States around energy use and policy. Ongoing conflicts in the Middle East and overwhelming evidence of long-term climate change have generated concern about continued reliance on fossil fuels. In addition, many Americans have become increasingly concerned about the overall impact on the environment of mass consumption.

Climate Change and Energy Policy

Americans are by far the largest consumers of energy. In the aftermath of the Arab oil embargo of 1973 and the energy crisis that followed the 1979 Iranian Revolution, some American policymakers began to look for ways for the United States to reduce its consumption of energy (see Period 8). This push toward a reduction in energy consumption has been augmented in recent decades by growing concerns over climate change.

Since the early 1980s, scientists have become aware of a trend toward warmer global temperatures. Some became convinced that this warming trend was caused by trapped greenhouse gasses, which, in turn were caused by human activities, primarily the burning of fossil fuels. In the 1990s and 2000s, a virtual consensus emerged in the scientific community around the connection between global warming and the emissions generated by the burning of fossil fuels. Calls were made to limit the human activities that were linked to global warming. The 1992 “Earth Summit” in Brazil led to the adoption by most of the countries in the world of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The 1997 Kyoto Protocol sets binding obligations on industrialized countries to reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses. The United States signed, but did not ratify the protocol. Global climate change has generated debate in the United States between those who would like to see limits

placed on the emissions of greenhouse gases and those who emphasize economic growth. To some degree, American society is making changes. California passed legislation in 2006 that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions from all sources, including automobiles. Other communities are taking steps that include encouraging bicycling and mass transit. Scientists and many observers wonder if the small steps being taken in the United States and elsewhere will be able to slow down the process of global warming.

D. NEW TECHNOLOGIES, NEW BEHAVIORS

The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have witnessed the spread of computer technology. The Internet has dramatically altered daily life, increasing access to information and fostering new social behaviors.

The Development and Spread of the Internet

The origins of the Internet date from the 1960s as the Department of Defense sought to create a computer system that would allow far-flung military installations to exchange computer information. In the late 1980s, universities in the United States created a computer network to facilitate the sharing of research, while in Switzerland, engineers developed the World Wide Web—a system of interlinked hypertext documents that organizes electronic information transmitted and accessed via the Internet.

Internet use grew rapidly in the 1990s, and has reshaped many aspects of daily life in the twenty-first century. E-mail communications quickly rendered letter writing obsolete. File sharing of music and video have forced the entertainment industry to rethink its business model. Traditional news outlets—newspapers, magazines, and even television—have been forced to compete with the instantaneous information available on the Internet. The Internet has changed practices in the workplace, allowing for virtual business meetings and telecommuting (working from home or a cafe). The Internet has also altered the world of commerce, allowing users to shop and purchase items with a few clicks on their personal computer. This has made shopping easier in many ways, but has driven many brick-and-mortar stores out of business. Bookstores have been hard hit by online booksellers and by the increased use of electronic books.

Although the Internet had become a popular fixture in American life by the mid-1990s, it was not fully utilized by political campaigns until the 2000s. In 2004, the unsuccessful campaign of Howard Dean demonstrated the potential of the Internet to raise money through donations. The 2008 campaign of Barack Obama fully embraced the Internet, building a grassroots movement of activists and contributors that helped carry Obama to victory. Today, websites and social media are central to political campaigns.

The Internet became more mobile with the introduction of smart phones in the early 2000s. Critics note the tendency of smart phones to distract users from tasks (such as driving) and social interactions in front of them, while enthusiasts marvel that the world of information on the Internet is now accessible in the palm of the hand.

II. Demographic and Social Changes

The United States experienced major demographic shifts in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, contributing to significant cultural and political consequences.

A. IMMIGRATION AND THE GROWTH OF THE “SUN BELT”

Since 1980, there has been a significant shift in the population toward the states of the South and the West. The growth of these regions was partly the result of increased immigration from Latin America and Asia.

Changing Demographics in the United States

An important factor in the growth of the Southwestern states has been increased immigration from Latin America. After passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, immigration, especially from Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East, increased significantly. Although the act added limits for migration from the Western Hemisphere for the first time, overall the impact of the act and of illegal immigration into the United States from within the Western Hemisphere have dramatically altered the demographics of the United States. Before the act, immigration accounted for less than 10 percent of population growth into the United States. Currently it accounts for approximately a third of population growth. For the thirty-five years before the act was passed, approximately 5 million immigrants came into the United States; in the 1970s alone, that number was 4.5 million, rising to more than 7 million in the 1980s, and more than 9 million in the 1990s.

Growth of the “Sun Belt”

The states of the “sun belt”—notably California, Texas, Arizona, Nevada, and Florida—have seen remarkable growth. This trend can be seen as early as World War II when defense-related industries attracted large numbers of workers. Affordable air conditioning also played a role in attracting migrants from within the United States. Florida has become a prime destination for retirees from colder parts of the United States. Immigration from Latin America accounts for much of the growth of the region. Many immigrants have been drawn to agricultural work in California and to the cities of the sun belt. The political power of the South and the West has grown significantly since 1980. This has generally augured well for the Republican Party as national politics have come to reflect the more conservative views of those in the West and South. As a result of the most recent census (2010), Arizona, Nevada, South Carolina, Georgia, and Utah, each gained one member of Congress; Texas added four seats; and Florida added two. By contrast, some of the more liberal states of the Midwest and Northeast lost power in Congress. Pennsylvania, Illinois, Michigan, Massachusetts, and New Jersey, each lost a House seat; New York and Ohio lost two seats each.

B. DEBATES AROUND IMMIGRATION REFORM

From the 1970s to the present, immigration into the United States has increased dramatically, increasing the size of the United States workforce, while also leading to intense political, economic, and social debates.

The Changing Ethnic Makeup of the United States

As the percentage of the American population composed of Asian, African, Middle Eastern, and Latin American immigrants and their children has grown, the percentage of the American population composed of non-Hispanic whites has declined—from 75 percent of the overall U.S. population in 1990 to just over 63 percent in 2011. It is estimated that by the

year 2042, non-Hispanic whites will no longer constitute a majority of the population of the United States.

Debates Around Immigration

The changing profile of the American population has raised concern among some Americans and has generated a broad debate around immigration policy. Many Americans argue that immigration should be restricted because it hurts the country economically; others focus on stopping illegal immigration. Members of the New Right expressed concern about the cultural impact of large-scale immigration into the United States. Will America, they wonder, fragment into ethnic enclaves? The Republican Party has generally embraced and courted the anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States. Republican politicians have argued for a more secure border with Mexico and for deportations of immigrants without proper immigration papers. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 reflected some of these concerns. Although the act enabled some immigrants without proper papers to achieve legal status, it also forced employers to ensure that their workforce was composed only of legal immigrants. Further reform of immigration policy has been a priority of the Obama administration in the 2010s.

C. DEBATES AROUND IDENTITY

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first century a number of social and political issues have divided Americans and have led to debates around American identity. Specifically, debates have occurred around immigration policy, the status of gays and lesbians, and gender roles.

Redefining Family Structures

The last decades of the twentieth century witnessed major changes in family structures in the United States. These changes, in turn, generated intense debate about the identity of the American family. An important trend was the growth of non-traditional families. In 1972, non-married households (either with or without children) stood at 26 percent of all families; that figure rose to 47 percent by 1998. This trend has divided liberals and conservatives in the United States, with liberals pushing for measures to extend rights and services to such households, and conservatives calling for a return to traditional family values.

Women in Professions

The “quiet revolution,” beginning in the 1970s, of women entering the workplace in larger numbers continued through the end of the twentieth century (see Period 8). Though women have made advances in the workplace, many note that disparities still exist. In the 1970s women, on average, earned 59 cents for each dollar that men earned doing comparable work. That gap has closed somewhat (to approximately 70 cents for each dollar earned by men) but still exists. In addition, women argued that they were often barred from higher positions in the corporate world. They argued that a “glass ceiling” existed that prevented them from climbing higher. The women’s movement has also pushed for government-funded day care, so that women could work outside the home.

The Gay Rights Movements and Changing Public Perceptions

The gay rights movement grew in intensity after the Stonewall riots of 1969 (see Period 8). The growth and development of the movement, coupled with a strong conservative backlash against gay rights and public acceptance of homosexuality, has shaped debates around gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender identity, acceptance, and rights.

The AIDS Crisis

The gay community faced a major health crisis in the 1980s that brought into stark relief the public divide around homosexuality. Starting in 1981, news reports began to appear about a mysterious disease that seemed to disproportionately affect gay men, causing anxiety and sorrow in the gay community, but also resolve and action. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified the disease that would become known as acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) in 1981. Soon it also found that the cause of the disease was infection by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), present in bodily fluids such as semen and blood. The National Institutes of Health (NIH), a government body within the United States Department of Health and Human Services, was slow to acknowledge and address the crisis. It was not until 1987 that NIH established a committee to research the impact of HIV.

AIDS swept through gay communities in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and elsewhere. On the one hand, AIDS became a lightning rod in the culture wars of the 1980s and beyond. Many Christian fundamentalists saw AIDS as God's punishment for those who practiced sinful behavior. On the other hand, the crisis galvanized the gay community and led to an outpouring of both grief and activism. The group ACT-UP popularized the slogan "silence = death," and staged militant protests in New York and San Francisco. In 1987, ACT-UP staged a "funeral" on Wall Street in New York, with participants lying in the street as deceased persons with AIDS—suggesting that this would be the rapid fate of millions of people if more resources were not devoted to research and treatment.

"Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

The armed forces of the United States have historically discriminated against gays serving in the military. In 1982, the Department of Defense issued a policy which stated that, "Homosexuality is incompatible with military service." In the following years, gay and lesbian members of the military, and those excluded from the military, began a campaign to change the military's policy. The Gay and Lesbian Military Freedom Project was founded in 1988. Finally, in 1994, the military implemented a policy that allowed gay and lesbian members of the military to serve, as long as they remained "closeted," keeping their sexual identity hidden from public view. Advocates for gays and lesbians insisted that the policy, called "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," was discriminatory and that it limited the freedom of speech and expression of gay and lesbian members of the military. The policy was repealed by an act of Congress, signed by President Obama in 2011.

Same-sex Marriage

Perhaps the clearest indicator of the rapid changes in societal attitudes toward homosexuality can be seen in the changing legal status of marriage between same-sex couples. Although gay rights proponents have long demanded that the right to legally marry be extended to same-sex couples, the issue became part of the national dialogue in 1993, when the Hawaii

Supreme Court, in the case of *Baehr v. Lewin*, ruled that the state ban on same-sex marriage was discriminatory under the state constitution. Though the Court did not mandate that the state begin issuing licenses to gay couples, it had the effect of galvanizing social conservatives to mobilize against same-sex marriage and to defend “traditional” marriage. Hawaii ratified an amendment to its constitution allowing the state legislature to ban same-sex marriage. Many states followed in Hawaii’s footsteps by amending their constitutions so as to prevent the legalization of same-sex marriage. These amendments usually defined marriage as an act between a man and a woman. Further, Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996, which allowed states to not recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states and defined, for federal purposes, marriage as an act between one man and one woman.

The tide against same-sex marriage began to turn in 2003, when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that the state may not forbid same-sex couples from legally marrying; it asserted that “the Massachusetts Constitution affirms the dignity and equality of all individuals. It forbids the creation of second-class citizens.” Several other state high courts followed suit in the 2000s. In 2009, Vermont became the first state in the United States to legalize same-sex marriage through legislative means rather than through the court system. In 2013, the Supreme Court, in *United States v. Windsor*, struck down the section of DOMA that defined marriage, for federal purposes, as an act between a man and a woman. The Court however, did not mandate that states allow same-sex couples to marry. Public opinion has moved rapidly on this issue. According to the Gallup organization, the aggregate of polls taken in 1996 showed 68 percent of Americans opposed extending legal recognition to same-sex couples, with only 27 percent supporting such a move. By 2013, the aggregate of polls showed that a majority of Americans favored legalized same-sex marriage.

SUBJECT TO DEBATE

With Ronald Reagan’s passing away (in 2004), his legacy has increasingly been the subject of historical work. Much of that work is highly partisan. On the one side, critics cite Reagan’s background in B-movies, such as *Bedtime for Bonzo*, and his seeming disinterest in matters of intellect, as evidence of incompetency as president. These critics note that Reagan napped during meetings while important policy matters were discussed. He seemed aloof from issues, and claimed ignorance of the complicated schemes that comprised the Iran-Contra scandal. Reagan’s defenders focus on one of the major events of the Reagan-Bush years—the fall of communism in Europe. Reagan initiated a massive military build-up that the Soviet Union could not keep up with. The Soviets’ attempt to keep pace broke their bank and led to the opening of the floodgates of change. In much of the recent work on Reagan’s legacy, these poles dominate discussion.

Historians of social movements have tried to understand the rise of the “New Right.” Some historians have drawn comparisons to previous conservative movements—the “Red Scare” of the 1920s or McCarthyism in the 1950s. Others have connected it to religious movements of the past, such as the Second Great Awakening of the early nineteenth century. Historians have also looked at the movement in the context of a backlash against the social movements and protest culture of the 1960s. If the legacy of the 1960s is “free love,” protest, and multiculturalism, the “New Right” stands for its opposites—conservative approaches to sexuality, respect for authority and discipline, and a unifying patriotism. The persistence of this movement into the age of President Barack Obama ensures that it will remain a topic of debate.

It is very difficult to debate the legacy of the very recent past. One topic that historians have begun to wrestle with is the origins of the toxic partisan atmosphere in Washington, DC. Some historians look to the impeachment process against President Clinton as a turning point in recent political history. The Republican-initiated inquest went beyond the usual jockeying between parties and made compromise between the parties increasingly difficult. Historians also note the unusual closeness of the two major parties in recent elections and in opinion polls. Both parties always feel like victory is in reach and seek to press any advantage they can to win points with the electorate. Future historians will have to put the election of the nation's first African-American president in a larger context.

Practice Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: Pick the letter that best answers the following questions.

QUESTIONS 1–2 REFER TO THE FOLLOWING PASSAGE:

“[As] Members of the House of Representatives and as citizens seeking to join that body we propose not just to change its policies, but even more important, to restore the bonds of trust between the people and their elected representatives.

“That is why in this era of official evasion and posturing, we offer instead a detailed agenda for national renewal, a written commitment with no fine print.

“This year’s election offers the chance, after four decades of one-party control, to bring to the House a new majority that will transform the way Congress works. That historic change would be the end of government that is too big, too intrusive, and too easy with the public’s money. It can be the beginning of a Congress that respects the values and shares the faith of the American family.

“To restore accountability to Congress. To end its cycle of scandal and disgrace. To make us all proud again of the way free people govern themselves.”

—“Contract With America” (excerpt), 1994

1. The writing of the “Contract With America,” excerpted above, demonstrates which of the following?
 - (A) The growth and influence of the conservative movement in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s
 - (B) The ability of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party to forge alliances in the 1980s and 1990s
 - (C) The importance of “third party” movements in terms of shaping political debates in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s
 - (D) The growing importance of social and religious issues, such as gay marriage and abortion, in public discourse