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# The New Conservatism and a New World Order



United States History

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Workbook #14

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## THE NEW CONSERVATISM AND A NEW WORLD ORDER: United States History Workbook #14

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## 1. A Society in Transition

Shifts in the structure of American society, begun years or even decades earlier, had become apparent by the time the 1980s arrived. The composition of the population and the most important jobs and skills in American society had undergone major changes.

The dominance of service jobs in the economy became undeniable. By the mid-1980s, nearly three-fourths of all employees worked in the service sector, for instance, as retail clerks, office workers, teachers, physicians, and government employees.

Service-sector activity benefited from the availability and increased use of the computer. The information age arrived, with hardware and software that could aggregate previously unimagined amounts of data about economic and social trends. The federal government had made significant investments in computer technology in the 1950s and 1960s for its military and space programs.

In 1976, two young California entrepreneurs, working out of a garage, assembled the first widely marketed computer for home use, named it the Apple, and ignited a revolution. By the early 1980s, millions of microcomputers had found their way into U.S. businesses and homes, and in 1982, Time magazine dubbed the computer its "Machine of the Year."

Meanwhile, America's "smokestack industries" were in decline. The U.S. automobile industry reeled under competition from highly efficient Japanese carmakers. By 1980 Japanese companies already manufactured a fifth of the vehicles sold in the United States. American manufacturers struggled with some success to match the cost efficiencies and engineering standards of their Japanese rivals, but their former dominance of the domestic car market was gone forever. The giant old-line steel companies shrank to relative insignificance as foreign steel makers adopted new technologies more readily.

Consumers were the beneficiaries of this ferocious competition in the manufacturing industries, but the painful struggle to cut costs meant the permanent loss of hundreds of thousands of blue-collar jobs. Those who could made the switch to the service sector; others became unfortunate statistics.

Population patterns shifted as well. After the end of the postwar "baby boom" (1946 to 1964), the overall rate of population growth declined and the population grew older. Household composition also changed. In 1980 the percentage of family households dropped; a quarter of all groups were now classified as "nonfamily households," in which two or more unrelated persons lived together.

New immigrants changed the character of American society in other ways. The 1965 reform in immigration policy shifted

the focus away from Western Europe, facilitating a dramatic increase in new arrivals from Asia and Latin America. In 1980, 808,000 immigrants arrived, the highest number in 60 years, as the country once more became a haven for people from around the world.

Additional groups became active participants in the struggle for equal opportunity. Homosexuals, using the tactics and rhetoric of the civil rights movement, depicted themselves as an oppressed group seeking recognition of basic rights. In 1975, the U.S. Civil Service Commission lifted its ban on employment of homosexuals. Many states enacted anti-discrimination laws.

Then, in 1981, came the discovery of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). Transmitted sexually or through blood transfusions, it struck homosexual men and intravenous drug users with particular virulence, although the general population proved vulnerable as well. By 1992, over 220,000 Americans had died of AIDS. The AIDS epidemic has by no means been limited to the United States, and the effort to treat the disease now encompasses physicians and medical researchers throughout the world.

### Questions

1. What jobs dominated the American economy by the 1980s?

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2. How did the information age affect the American economy?

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3. What was the first computer to be designed for home use?

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4. What nation's automobile industry competed with that of the United States?

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5. How had household composition changed by the 1980s?

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6. Beginning in 1965, where did many American immigrants come from?

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7. What fatal disease was discovered in 1981?

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## 2. Conservatism and the Rise of Ronald Reagan

For many Americans, the economic, social, and political trends of the previous two decades – crime and racial polarization in many urban centers, challenges to traditional values, the economic downturn and inflation of the Carter years – engendered a mood of disillusionment. It also strengthened a renewed suspicion of government and its ability to deal effectively with the country's social and political problems.

Conservatives, long out of power at the national level, were well positioned politically in the context of this new mood. Many Americans were receptive to their message of limited government, strong national defense, and the protection of traditional values.

This conservative upsurge had many sources. A large group of fundamentalist Christians were particularly concerned about crime and sexual immorality. They hoped to return religion or the moral precepts often associated with it to a central place in American life. One of the most politically effective groups in the early

1980s, the Moral Majority, was led by a Baptist minister, Jerry Falwell. Another, led by the Reverend Pat Robertson, built an organization, the Christian Coalition, that by the 1990s was a significant force in the Republican Party. Using television to spread their messages, Falwell, Robertson, and others like them developed substantial followings.

Another galvanizing issue for conservatives was divisive and emotional: abortion. Opposition to the 1973 Supreme Court decision, *Roe v. Wade*, which upheld a woman's right to an abortion in the early months of pregnancy, brought together a wide array of organizations and individuals. They included, but were not limited to, Catholics, political conservatives, and religious evangelicals, most of whom regarded abortion under virtually any circumstances as tantamount to murder. Pro-choice and pro-life (that is, pro- and anti-abortion rights) demonstrations became a fixture of the political landscape.

Within the Republican Party, the conservative wing grew dominant once again. They had briefly seized control of the Republican Party in 1964 with its presidential candidate, Barry Goldwater, then faded from the spotlight. By 1980, however, with the apparent failure of liberalism under Carter, a "New Right" was poised to return to dominance.

Using modern direct mail techniques as well as the power of mass communications to spread their message and raise funds, drawing on the ideas of conservatives like

economist Milton Friedman, journalists William F. Buckley, and George Will, and research institutions like the Heritage Foundation, the New Right played a significant role in defining the issues of the 1980s.

The "Old" Goldwater Right had favored strict limits on government intervention in the economy. This tendency was reinforced by a significant group of "New Right" "libertarian conservatives" who distrusted government in general and opposed state interference in personal behavior. But the New Right also encompassed a stronger, often evangelical faction determined to wield state power to encourage its views. The New Right favored tough measures against crime, a strong national defense, a constitutional amendment to permit prayer in public schools, and opposition to abortion.

The figure that drew all these disparate strands together was Ronald Reagan. Reagan, born in Illinois, achieved stardom as an actor in Hollywood movies and television before turning to politics. He first achieved political prominence with a nationwide televised speech in 1964 in support of Barry Goldwater. In 1966 Reagan won the governorship of California and served until 1975. He narrowly missed winning the Republican nomination for president in 1976 before succeeding in 1980 and going on to win the presidency from the incumbent, Jimmy Carter.

President Reagan's unflagging optimism and his ability to celebrate the

achievements and aspirations of the American people persisted throughout his two terms in office. He was a figure of reassurance and stability for many Americans. Wholly at ease before the microphone and the television camera, Reagan was called the "Great Communicator."

Taking a phrase from the 17th-century Puritan leader John Winthrop, he told the nation that the United States was a "shining city on a hill," invested with a God-given mission to defend the world against the spread of Communist totalitarianism.

Reagan believed that government intruded too deeply into American life. He wanted to cut programs he contended the country did not need, and to eliminate "waste, fraud, and abuse." Reagan accelerated the program of deregulation begun by Jimmy Carter. He sought to abolish many regulations affecting the consumer, the workplace, and the environment. These, he argued, were inefficient, expensive, and detrimental to economic growth.

Reagan also reflected the belief held by many conservatives that the law should be strictly applied against violators. Shortly after becoming president, he faced a nationwide strike by U.S. air transportation controllers. Although the job action was forbidden by law, such strikes had been widely tolerated in the past. When the air controllers refused to return to work, he ordered them all fired. Over the next few

years the system was rebuilt with new hires.

### Questions

1. What factors led conservatives to return to power in the United States?

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2. What were the general beliefs of conservatives?

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3. Describe the Moral Majority and the Christian Coalition.

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4. What landmark 1973 Supreme Court decision made abortion a focus of the conservative movement?

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5. Explain the differences between the "Old Right" and the "New Right."

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6. Who was elected president in 1980?

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7. Describe the actions and policies of Ronald Reagan.

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### 3. The Economy in the 1980s

President Reagan's domestic program was rooted in his belief that the nation would prosper if the power of the private economic sector was unleashed. The guiding theory behind it, "supply side" economics, held that a greater supply of goods and services, made possible by measures to increase business investment, was the swiftest road to economic growth. Accordingly, the Reagan administration argued that a large tax cut would increase capital investment and corporate earnings,



so that even lower taxes on these larger earnings would increase government revenues.

Despite only a slim Republican majority in the Senate and a House of Representatives controlled by the Democrats, President Reagan succeeded during his first year in office in enacting the major components of his economic program, including a 25-percent tax cut for individuals to be phased in over three years. The administration also sought and won significant increases in defense spending to modernize the nation's military and counter what it felt was a continual and growing threat from the Soviet Union.

Under Paul Volcker, the Federal Reserve's draconian increases in interest rates squeezed the runaway inflation that had begun in the late 1970s. The recession hit bottom in 1982, with the prime interest rates approaching 20 percent and the economy falling sharply. That year, real gross domestic product (GDP) fell by 2 percent; the unemployment rate rose to nearly 10 percent, and almost one-third of America's industrial plants lay idle. Throughout the Midwest, major firms like General Electric and International Harvester released workers. Stubbornly high petroleum prices contributed to the decline. Economic rivals like Germany and Japan won a greater share of world trade, and U.S. consumption of goods from other countries rose sharply.

Farmers also suffered hard times. During the 1970s, American farmers had

helped India, China, the Soviet Union, and other countries suffering from crop shortages, and had borrowed heavily to buy land and increase production. But the rise in oil prices pushed up costs, and a worldwide economic slump in 1980 reduced the demand for agricultural products. Their numbers declined, as production increasingly became concentrated in large operations. Small farmers who survived had major difficulties making ends meet.

The increased military budget – combined with the tax cuts and the growth in government health spending – resulted in the federal government spending far more than it received in revenues each year. Some analysts charged that the deficits were part of a deliberate administration strategy to prevent further increases in domestic spending sought by the Democrats. However, both Democrats and Republicans in Congress refused to cut such spending. From \$74,000-million in 1980, the deficit soared to \$221,000-million in 1986 before falling back to \$150,000-million in 1987.

The deep recession of the early 1980s successfully curbed the runaway inflation that had started during the Carter years. Fuel prices, moreover, fell sharply, with at least part of the drop attributable to Reagan's decision to abolish controls on the pricing and allocation of gasoline. Conditions began to improve in late 1983. By early 1984, the economy had rebounded. By the fall of 1984, the recovery



was well along, allowing Reagan to run for re-election on the slogan, "It's morning again in America." He defeated his Democratic opponent, former Senator and Vice President Walter Mondale, by an overwhelming margin.

The United States entered one of the longest periods of sustained economic growth since World War II. Consumer spending increased in response to the federal tax cut. The stock market climbed as it reflected the optimistic buying spree. Over a five-year period following the start of the recovery, Gross National Product grew at an annual rate of 4.2 percent. The annual inflation rate remained between 3 and 5 percent from 1983 to 1987, except in 1986 when it fell to just under 2 percent, the lowest level in decades. The nation's GNP grew substantially during the 1980s; from 1982 to 1987, its economy created more than 13 million new jobs.

Steadfast in his commitment to lower taxes, Reagan signed the most sweeping federal tax-reform measure in 75 years during his second term. This measure, which had widespread Democratic as well as Republican support, lowered income tax rates, simplified tax brackets, and closed loopholes.

However, a significant percentage of this growth was based on deficit spending. Moreover, the national debt, far from being stabilized by strong economic growth, nearly tripled. Much of the growth occurred in skilled service and technical areas. Many poor and middle-class families did less

well. The administration, although an advocate of free trade, pressured Japan to agree to a voluntary quota on its automobile exports to the United States.

The economy was jolted on October 19, 1987, "Black Monday," when the stock market suffered the greatest one-day crash in its history, 22.6 percent. The causes of the crash included the large U.S. international trade and federal-budget deficits, the high level of corporate and personal debt, and new computerized stock trading techniques that allowed instantaneous selling of stocks and futures. Despite the memories of 1929 it evoked, however, the crash was a transitory event with little impact. In fact, economic growth continued, with the unemployment rate dropping to a 14-year low of 5.2 percent in June 1988.

### Questions

1. Explain the theory of "supply-side" economics.

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2. Describe the recession of 1982.

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3. What difficulties did farmers face in the 1980s, and why?

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4. How and why did the federal deficit grow in the 1980s?

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5. Describe the economic recovery of the late 1980s.

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6. What caused "Black Monday" in 1987?

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7. Do you agree with Ronald Reagan's economic policies? Why or why not? Give specific examples.

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#### 4. Foreign Affairs

In foreign policy, Reagan sought a more assertive role for the nation, and Central America provided an early test. The United States provided El Salvador with a program of economic aid and military training when a guerrilla insurgency threatened to topple its government. It also actively encouraged the transition to an elected democratic government, but efforts to curb active right-wing death squads were only partly successful. U.S. support helped stabilize the government, but the level of violence there remained undiminished. A peace agreement was finally reached in early 1992.

U.S. policy toward Nicaragua was more controversial. In 1979 revolutionaries calling themselves Sandinistas overthrew the repressive right-wing Somoza regime and established a pro-Cuba, pro-Soviet dictatorship. Regional peace efforts ended

in failure, and the focus of administration efforts shifted to support for the anti-Sandinista resistance, known as the *contras*.

Following intense political debate over this policy, Congress ended all military aid to the *contras* in October 1984, then, under administration pressure, reversed itself in the fall of 1986, and approved \$100 million in military aid. However, a lack of success on the battlefield, charges of human rights abuses, and the revelation that funds from secret arms sales to Iran (see below) had been diverted to the *contras* undercut congressional support to continue this aid.

Subsequently, the administration of President George H.W. Bush, who succeeded Reagan as president in 1989, abandoned any effort to secure military aid for the *contras*. The Bush administration also exerted pressure for free elections and supported an opposition political coalition, which won an astonishing upset election in February 1990, ousting the Sandinistas from power.

The Reagan administration was more fortunate in witnessing a return to democracy throughout the rest of Latin America, from Guatemala to Argentina. The emergence of democratically elected governments was not limited to Latin America; in Asia, the "people power" campaign of Corazón Aquino overthrew the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos, and elections in South Korea ended decades of military rule.

By contrast, South Africa remained intransigent in the face of U.S. efforts to encourage an end to racial apartheid through the controversial policy of "constructive engagement," quiet diplomacy coupled with public endorsement of reform. In 1986, frustrated at the lack of progress, the U.S. Congress overrode Reagan's veto and imposed a set of economic sanctions on South Africa. In February 1990, South African President F.W. de Klerk announced Nelson Mandela's release and began the slow dismantling of apartheid.

Despite its outspoken anti-Communist rhetoric, the Reagan administration's direct use of military force was restrained. On October 25, 1983, U.S. forces landed on the Caribbean island of Grenada after an urgent appeal for help by neighboring countries. The action followed the assassination of Grenada's leftist prime minister by members of his own Marxist-oriented party. After a brief period of fighting, U.S. troops captured hundreds of Cuban military and construction personnel and seized caches of Soviet-supplied arms. In December 1983, the last American combat troops left Grenada, which held democratic elections a year later.

The Middle East, however, presented a far more difficult situation. A military presence in Lebanon, where the United States was attempting to bolster a weak, but moderate pro-Western government, ended tragically, when 241 U.S. Marines were killed in a terrorist bombing in

October 1983. In April 1986, U.S. Navy and Air Force planes struck targets in Tripoli and Benghazi, Libya, in retaliation for Libyan-instigated terrorist attacks on U.S. military personnel in Europe.

In the Persian Gulf, the earlier breakdown in U.S.-Iranian relations and the Iran-Iraq War set the stage for U.S. naval activities in the region. Initially, the United States responded to a request from Kuwait for protection of its tanker fleet; but eventually the United States, along with naval vessels from Western Europe, kept vital shipping lanes open by escorting convoys of tankers and other neutral vessels traveling up and down the Gulf.

In late 1986 Americans learned that the administration had secretly sold arms to Iran in an attempt to resume diplomatic relations with the hostile Islamic government and win freedom for American hostages held in Lebanon by radical organizations that Iran controlled. Investigation also revealed that funds from the arms sales had been diverted to the Nicaraguan contras during a period when Congress had prohibited such military aid.

The ensuing Iran-contra hearings before a joint House-Senate committee examined issues of possible illegality as well as the broader question of defining American foreign policy interests in the Middle East and Central America. In a larger sense, the hearings were a constitutional debate about government secrecy and presidential versus congressional authority in the conduct of foreign relations. Unlike the

celebrated Senate Watergate hearings 14 years earlier, they found no grounds for impeaching the president and could reach no definitive conclusion about these perennial issues.

### Questions

1. How did Ronald Reagan approach American foreign policy?

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2. Describe American intervention in El Salvador.

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3. Describe American intervention in Nicaragua.

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4. Who became president of the United States in 1989?

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5. What did the United States government do to help end apartheid in South Africa?

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6. Describe American intervention in Grenada.

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7. Describe American intervention in Lebanon.

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8. What were the Iran-hostage scandal and the Iran-contra hearings?

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9. Under Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush, the United States intervened militarily in both the Middle East and Latin America. Based on what you know of these events, do you agree that American intervention was necessary? Use facts to support your answer.

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## 5. U.S.-Soviet Relations

In relations with the Soviet Union, President Reagan's declared policy was one of peace through strength. He was determined to stand firm against the

country he would in 1983 call an "evil empire." Two early events increased U.S.-Soviet tensions: the suppression of the Solidarity labor movement in Poland in December 1981, and the destruction with 269 fatalities of an off-course civilian airliner, Korean Airlines Flight 007, by a Soviet jet fighter on September 1, 1983. The United States also condemned the continuing Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and continued aid begun by the Carter administration to the mujahedeen resistance there.

During Reagan's first term, the United States spent unprecedented sums for a massive defense build-up, including the placement of intermediate-range nuclear missiles in Europe to counter Soviet deployments of similar missiles. And on March 23, 1983, in one of the most hotly debated policy decisions of his presidency, Reagan announced the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) research program to explore advanced technologies, such as lasers and high-energy projectiles, to defend against intercontinental ballistic missiles. Although many scientists questioned the technological feasibility of SDI and economists pointed to the extraordinary sums of money involved, the administration pressed ahead with the project.

After re-election in 1984, Reagan softened his position on arms control.

Moscow was amenable to agreement, in part because its economy already expended a far greater proportion of national output

on its military than did the United States. Further increases, Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev felt, would cripple his plans to liberalize the Soviet economy.

In November 1985, Reagan and Gorbachev agreed in principle to seek 50-percent reductions in strategic offensive nuclear arms as well as an interim agreement on intermediate-range nuclear forces. In December 1987, they signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty providing for the destruction of that entire category of nuclear weapons. By then, the Soviet Union seemed a less menacing adversary. Reagan could take much of the credit for a greatly diminished Cold War, but as his administration ended, almost no one realized just how shaky the USSR had become.

### Questions

1. What two events increased U.S.-Soviet tensions in the early 1980s?

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2. Describe the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

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3. What was the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty?

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4. Some historians have argued that the United States won the Cold War by forcing the Soviet Union to compete with the United States in military spending. Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

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## 6. The Presidency of George H.W. Bush

President Reagan enjoyed unusually high popularity at the end of his second

term in office, but under the terms of the U.S. Constitution he could not run again in 1988. The Republican nomination went to Vice President George Herbert Walker Bush, who was elected the 41st president of the United States.

Bush campaigned by promising voters a continuation of the prosperity Reagan had brought. In addition, he argued that he would support a strong defense for the United States more reliably than the Democratic candidate, Michael Dukakis. He also promised to work for "a kinder, gentler America." Dukakis, the governor of Massachusetts, claimed that less fortunate Americans were hurting economically and that the government had to help them while simultaneously bringing the federal debt and defense spending under control. The public was much more engaged, however, by Bush's economic message: No new taxes. In the balloting, Bush had a 54-to-46-percent popular vote margin.

During his first year in office, Bush followed a conservative fiscal program, pursuing policies on taxes, spending, and debt that were faithful to the Reagan administration's economic program. But the new president soon found himself squeezed between a large budget deficit and a deficit-reduction law. Spending cuts seemed necessary, and Bush possessed little leeway to introduce new budget items.

The Bush administration advanced new policy initiatives in areas not requiring major new federal expenditures. Thus, in



November 1990, Bush signed sweeping legislation imposing new federal standards on urban smog, automobile exhaust, toxic air pollution, and acid rain, but with industrial polluters bearing most of the costs. He accepted legislation requiring physical access for the disabled, but with no federal assumption of the expense of modifying buildings to accommodate wheelchairs and the like. The president also launched a campaign to encourage volunteerism, which he called, in a memorable phrase, "a thousand points of light."

### Questions

1. Who won the presidential election of 1988?

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2. What economic problems did George H.W. Bush face?

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3. What policies did George H.W. Bush pursue?

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### 7. Budgets and Deficits

Bush administration efforts to gain control over the federal budget deficit, however, were more problematic. One source of the difficulty was the savings and loan crisis. Savings banks – formerly tightly regulated, low-interest safe havens for ordinary people – had been deregulated, allowing these institutions to compete more aggressively by paying higher interest rates and by making riskier loans. Increases in the government's deposit insurance guaranteed reduced consumer incentive to shun less-sound institutions. Fraud, mismanagement, and the choppy economy produced widespread insolvencies among these thrifts (the umbrella term for consumer-oriented institutions like savings and loan associations and savings banks). By 1993, the total cost of selling and shuttering failed thrifts was staggering, nearly \$525,000-million.

In January 1990, President Bush presented his budget proposal to Congress. Democrats argued that administration budget projections were far too optimistic, and that meeting the deficit-reduction law would require tax increases and sharper cuts in defense spending. That June, after protracted negotiations, the president agreed to a tax increase. All the same, the combination of economic recession, losses from the savings and loan industry rescue operation, and escalating health care costs for Medicare and Medicaid offset all the deficit-reduction measures and produced a shortfall in 1991 at least as large as the previous year's.

### Questions

1. Describe the savings and loan crisis.

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2. What are thrifts?

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3. Why did George H.W. Bush agree to tax increases?

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## 8. End to the Cold War

When Bush became president, the Soviet empire was on the verge of collapse. Gorbachev's efforts to open up the USSR's economy appeared to be floundering. In 1989, the Communist governments in one Eastern European country after another simply collapsed, after it became clear that Russian troops would not be sent to prop them up. In mid-1991, hard-liners attempted a coup d'état, only to be foiled by Gorbachev rival Boris Yeltsin, president of the Russian republic. At the end of that year, Yeltsin, now dominant, forced the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The Bush administration adeptly brokered the end of the Cold War, working closely with Gorbachev and Yeltsin. It led the negotiations that brought the unification of East and West Germany (September 1990), agreement on large arms reductions in Europe (November 1990), and large cuts in nuclear arsenals (July 1991). After the liquidation of the Soviet Union, the United States and the new

Russian Federation agreed to phase out all multiple-warhead missiles over a 10-year period.

The disposal of nuclear materials and the ever-present concerns of nuclear proliferation now superseded the threat of nuclear conflict between Washington and Moscow.

### Questions

1. What was happening in Eastern Europe in 1989?

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2. Who was Boris Yeltsin?

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3. What country was reunited in September of 1990?

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4. What superseded the threat of nuclear conflict following the collapse of the Soviet Union?

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## 9. The Gulf War

The euphoria caused by the drawing down of the Cold War was dramatically overshadowed by the August 2, 1990, invasion of the small nation of Kuwait by Iraq. Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, and Iran, under its Islamic fundamentalist regime, had emerged as the two major military powers in the oil-rich Persian Gulf area. The two countries had fought a long, inconclusive war in the 1980s. Less hostile to the United States than Iran, Iraq had won some support from the Reagan and Bush administrations. The occupation of Kuwait, posing a threat to Saudi Arabia, changed the diplomatic calculation overnight.

President Bush strongly condemned the Iraqi action, called for Iraq's unconditional withdrawal, and sent a major deployment of U.S. troops to the Middle East. He assembled one of the most extraordinary military and political coalitions of modern times, with military forces from Asia, Europe, and Africa, as well as the Middle East.

In the days and weeks following the invasion, the U.N. Security Council passed

12 resolutions condemning the Iraqi invasion and imposing wide-ranging economic sanctions on Iraq. On November 29, it approved the use of force if Iraq did not withdraw from Kuwait by January 15, 1991. Gorbachev's Soviet Union, once Iraq's major arms supplier, made no effort to protect its former client.

Bush also confronted a major constitutional issue. The U.S. Constitution gives the legislative branch the power to declare war. Yet in the second half of the 20th century, the United States had become involved in Korea and Vietnam without an official declaration of war and with only murky legislative authorization. On January 12, 1991, three days before the U.N. deadline, Congress granted President Bush the authority he sought in the most explicit and sweeping war-making power given a president in nearly half a century.

The United States, in coalition with Great Britain, France, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other countries, succeeded in liberating Kuwait with a devastating, U.S.-led air campaign that lasted slightly more than a month. It was followed by a massive invasion of Kuwait and Iraq by armored and airborne infantry forces. With their superior speed, mobility, and firepower, the allied forces overwhelmed the Iraqi forces in a land campaign lasting only 100 hours.

The victory, however, was incomplete and unsatisfying. The U.N. resolution, which Bush enforced to the letter, called only for the expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait. Saddam

Hussein remained in power, savagely repressing the Kurds in the north and the Shiites in the south, both of whom the United States had encouraged to rebel. Hundreds of oil-well fires, deliberately set in Kuwait by the Iraqis, took until November 1991 to extinguish. Saddam's regime also apparently thwarted U.N. inspectors who, operating in accordance with Security Council resolutions, worked to locate and destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear facilities more advanced than had previously been suspected and huge stocks of chemical weapons.

The Gulf War enabled the United States to persuade the Arab states, Israel, and a Palestinian delegation to begin direct negotiations aimed at resolving the complex and interlocked issues that could eventually lead to a lasting peace in the region. The talks began in Madrid, Spain, on October 30, 1991. In turn, they set the stage for the secret negotiations in Norway that led to what at the time seemed a historic agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, signed at the White House on September 13, 1993.

### Questions

1. What small nation was invaded by Iraq in 1990?

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2. Who was ruler of Iraq during the Gulf War?

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3. What two Iraqi groups were encouraged to rebel by the United States?

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4. What changes occurred in the Middle East following the Gulf War?

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## 10. Panama and NAFTA

The president also received broad bipartisan congressional backing for the brief U.S. invasion of Panama on December 20, 1989, that deposed dictator General Manuel Antonio Noriega. In the 1980s, addiction to crack cocaine reached epidemic proportions, and President Bush put the "War on Drugs" at the center of his domestic agenda. Moreover, Noriega, an especially brutal dictator, had attempted to maintain himself in power with rather

crude displays of anti-Americanism. After seeking refuge in the Vatican embassy, Noriega turned himself over to U.S. authorities. He was later tried and convicted in U.S. federal court in Miami, Florida, of drug trafficking and racketeering.

On the economic front, the Bush administration negotiated the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Mexico and Canada. It would be ratified after an intense debate in the first year of the Clinton administration.

### Questions

1. What country was invaded by the United States in December of 1989?

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2. Who was Manuel Noriega?

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3. Of what was Noriega convicted in United States federal court?

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4. What does the acronym *NAFTA* stand for?

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## 11. Third Party and Independent Candidates

The United States is often thought of as functioning under a two-party system. In practical effect this is true: Either a Democrat or a Republican has occupied the White House every year since 1852. At the same time, however, the country has produced a plethora of third and minor parties over the years. For example, 58 parties were represented on at least one state ballot during the 1992 presidential elections. Among these were obscure parties such as the Apathy, the Looking Back, the New Mexico Prohibition, the Tish Independent Citizens, and the Vermont Taxpayers.

Third parties organize around a single issue or set of issues. They tend to fare best when they have a charismatic leader. With the presidency out of reach, most seek a platform to publicize their political and social concerns.

**Theodore Roosevelt.** The most successful third-party candidate of the 20th century was a Republican, Theodore Roosevelt, the former president. His Progressive or Bull Moose Party won 27.4

percent of the vote in the 1912 election. The progressive wing of the Republican Party, having grown disenchanted with President William Howard Taft, whom Roosevelt had hand-picked as his successor, urged Roosevelt to seek the party nomination in 1912. This he did, defeating Taft in a number of primaries. Taft controlled the party machinery, however, and secured the nomination.

Roosevelt's supporters then broke away and formed the Progressive Party. Declaring himself as fit as a bull moose (hence the party's popular name), Roosevelt campaigned on a platform of regulating "big business," women's suffrage, a graduated income tax, the Panama Canal, and conservation. His effort was sufficient to defeat Taft. By splitting the Republican vote, however, he helped ensure the election of the Democrat Woodrow Wilson.

**Socialists.** The Socialist Party also reached its high point in 1912, attaining 6 percent of the popular vote. Perennial candidate Eugene Debs won nearly 900,000 votes that year, advocating collective ownership of the transportation and communication industries, shorter working hours, and public works projects to spur employment. Convicted of sedition during World War I, Debs campaigned from his cell in 1920.

**Robert LaFollette.** Another Progressive was Senator Robert La Follette, who won more than 16 percent of the vote in the 1924 election. Long a champion of farmers



and industrial workers, and an ardent foe of big business, La Follette was a prime mover in the recreation of the Progressive movement following World War I. Backed by the farm and labor vote, as well as by Socialists and remnants of Roosevelt's Bull Moose Party, La Follette ran on a platform of nationalizing railroads and the country's natural resources. He also strongly supported increased taxation on the wealthy and the right of collective bargaining. He carried only his home state of Wisconsin.

**Henry Wallace.** The Progressive Party reinvented itself in 1948 with the nomination of Henry Wallace, a former secretary of agriculture and vice president under Franklin Roosevelt. Wallace's 1948 platform opposed the Cold War, the Marshall Plan, and big business. He also campaigned to end discrimination against African Americans and women, backed a minimum wage, and called for the elimination of the House Committee on Un-American Activities. His failure to repudiate the U.S. Communist Party, which had endorsed him, undermined his popularity and he wound up with just over 2.4 percent of the popular vote.

**Dixiecrats.** Like the Progressives, the States Rights or Dixiecrat Party, led by South Carolina Governor Strom Thurmond, emerged in 1948 as a spinoff from the Democratic Party. Its opposition stemmed from Truman's civil rights platform. Although defined in terms of "states' rights," the party's goal was continuing

racial segregation and the "Jim Crow" laws that sustained it.

**George Wallace.** The racial and social upheavals of the 1960s helped bring George Wallace, another segregationist Southern governor, to national attention. Wallace built a following through his colorful attacks against civil rights, liberals, and the federal government. Founding the American Independent Party in 1968, he ran his campaign from the statehouse in Montgomery, Alabama, winning 13.5 percent of the overall presidential vote.

**H. Ross Perot.** Every third party seeks to capitalize on popular dissatisfaction with the major parties and the federal government. At few times in recent history, however, has this sentiment been as strong as it was during the 1992 election. A hugely wealthy Texas businessman, Perot possessed a knack for getting his message of economic common sense and fiscal responsibility across to a wide spectrum of the people. Lamponing the nation's leaders and reducing his economic message to easily understood formulas, Perot found little difficulty gaining media attention. His campaign organization, United We Stand, was staffed primarily by volunteers and backed by his personal fortune. Far from resenting his wealth, many admired Perot's business success and the freedom it brought him from soliciting campaign funds from special interests. Perot withdrew from the race in July. Re-entering it a month before the election, he won over 19 million votes as the Reform Party



standard-bearer, nearly 19 percent of the total cast. This was by far the largest number ever tallied by a third-party candidate and second only to Theodore Roosevelt's 1912 showing as a percentage of the total.

### Questions

1. Around what do third parties organize?

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2. Describe the political party formed by Theodore Roosevelt.

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3. Who ran for president as a Socialist in the early 1900s?

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4. Describe Robert LaFollette.

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5. What was Henry Wallace's political platform?

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6. What were the goals of the Dixiecrats?

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7. Who founded the American Independent Party in 1968?

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8. Why was H. Ross Perot so popular?

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9. Would you consider voting for a third-party candidate? Why or why not?

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