**The 1980s**

By the 1980s, the American population was aging and more people were living in the South and West. The led to the emergence of a new politically conservative movement.

**The Triumph of Conservatism**

* President **Jimmy Carter's** administration was unable to control the rampant inflation or handle foreign affairs.  It also refused to remove regulatory controls from major industries such as airlines.
* As the Democrats left the race, the Republicans, realizing that the average American was older and more mature than during the stormy sixties and was therefore more likely to favor the right, chose conservative and former actor **Ronald Reagan**, signaling the return of **conservatism**.
* New groups that later spearheaded the "**new right**" **movement** included **Moral Majority** and other conservative Christian groups.

**The Election of Ronald Reagan, 1980**

* **Ronald Reagan** was a **neoconservative** who opposed a big government, supported the "common man's" rights, and opposed favoritism for minorities. He tried to spin the Democrats as a party who supported big government and only supported minorities.
* Like neoconservatives, he also supported free-market capitalism, supported anti-Soviet policies, opposed liberal welfare programs and affirmative-action policies, and he called for the reassertion of traditional values of individualism and the centrality of family.
* **Ronald Reagan** overwhelmingly won the **election of 1980**

**The Reagan Revolution**

* The **Iranian's** released the **hostages** on Reagan's Inauguration Day, January 20, 1981, after 444 days of captivity.
* Reagan assembled a conservative cabinet when he took office.
* A major goal of Reagan was to **reduce the size of the government** by **shrinking** the **federal budget** and **cutting taxes**.  He proposed a new federal budget that called for **cuts** of $35 billion, mostly in **social programs**, including food stamps and federally-funded job-training centers.
* On **March 6, 1981**, Reagan was **shot**.  12 days later, he recovered and returned to work.

**The Battle of the Budget**

* Reagan called for substantial **tax cuts**, and in August 1981, Congress approved a set of tax reforms that lowered individual tax rates, reduced federal estate taxes, and created new tax-free saving plans for small investors.
* Reagan supported "**supply-side**"**economics**: reducing taxes will enable businesses to produce more goods, which will lower prices, increase consumer spending, and create more jobs. Reagan believed that this would stimulate new investment, boost productivity, promote dramatic economic growth, and reduce the federal deficit. (**Reaganomics**)
* In 1981-1982, the economy slipped into a recession as unemployment rose and banks closed. The anti-inflationary policies that caused the **recession of 1982** had actually been created by the Federal Reserve Board in 1979, during Carter's presidency.
* During the 1980s, **income gaps** **widened** between the rich and the poor.
* By the mid-1980s, the economy had recovered. Economists speculated that the economy had recovered because of Reagan's massive **military expenditures**.  Reagan gave the Pentagon nearly $2 trillion in the 1980s. This massive expenditure led to an unbalanced federal budget and it **substantially increased the national debt**.

**Reagan Renews the Cold War**

* Reagan's **strategy** for dealing with the Soviet Union was to **initiate a new arms race and outspend the Soviets**. He expected that the American economy could better support an expensive arms race than the Soviet Union's economy.
* In March 1983, Reagan announced a missile-defense system called the **Strategic Defense Initiative**(**SDI**), also known as **Star Wars**.  The plan called for orbiting battle satellites in space that could fire laser beams to shoot down intercontinental missiles.
* In 1981, the USSR declared martial law in Poland. In **1983**, a Korean passenger **airliner** was shot down when it flew into Soviet airspace.  By the end of 1983, all arms-control negotiations were broken, and the Cold War was intensified.

**Troubles Abroad**

* In June **1982**, **Israel** invaded **Lebanon**, seeking to destroy the guerilla bases from which Palestinian fighters attacked Israel.  Reagan sent peacekeeping troops, but after a suicide bomber killed 200 marines, he withdrew the force.
* In **1979**, Reagan sent "military advisors" to **El Salvador** to support the pro-American government.  In **October 1983**, he sent forces to the island of **Grenada**, where a military coup had killed the prime minister and brought Marxists to power.

**Round Two for Reagan**

* **Ronald Reagan** overwhelmingly won the **election of 1984**.
* Foreign policy issues dominated Reagan's second term.
* **Mikhail Gorbachev** became the leader of the Soviet Union in 1985. He was committed to reforming the country with two policies:***Glasnost*** sought to allow free speech and political freedom and ***Perestroika*** sought to adopt capitalistic economic policies. These two policies required the Soviet Union to reduce the size of its military and concentrate aid on its citizens.
* **This necessitated an end to the Cold War**.  In **December 1985**, Reagan and Gorbachev signed the **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty**, banning all intermediate-range nuclear missiles from Europe.

**The Iran-Contra Affair**

* Reagan was plagued by 2 problems: American hostages were held by Muslim extremists in Lebanon, and **Nicaragua** was run by a left-wing **Sandinista** government. To circumvent Congress's ban on sending arms to the Nicaraguan rebels who fought Sandinista, the Reagan administration secretly sold arms to **Iran** (who helped free hostages) and then diverted the money from the sales to the rebels.
* In **November 1986**, news of the **secret dealings** broke and ignited a firestorm of controversy.  Reagan claimed he had no idea of the illicit activities. **Criminal indictments** were brought against Oliver North, Admiral John Poindexter, and Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger.
* The **Iran-contra affair** cast a shadow over Reagan's record in foreign policy.

**Reagan's Economic Legacy**

* Reagan's tax cuts and huge increases in military spending caused **$200 billion in annual deficits**, which added $2 trillion to the national debt during Reagan's administration. However, Reagan's large budget deficits helped make future social welfare programs seem economically infeasible. Thus, Reagan had achieved his goal of limiting the expansion of welfare programs.
* In the early 1990s, **median household income** declined.

**The Religious Right**

* In **1979**, **Reverend Jerry Falwell** founded a political organization called the **Moral Majority**.  He preached against sexual permissiveness, abortion, feminism, and the spread of gay rights.  The organization became an aggressive political advocate of conservative causes.

**Conservatism in the Courts**

* By the time he had left office, Reagan had appointed **3 conservative-minded judges**, including **Sandra Day O'Connor**, the first women to become a Supreme Court Justice.
* Reagan sought to use the Supreme Court to fight **affirmative action** and **abortion**.
* **Affirmative Action** - In two cases in **1989** (***Ward's Cove Packing v. Antonia*** and ***Martin v. Wilks***), the Court made it more difficult to prove that an employer practiced racial discrimination in hiring.
* **Abortion** - In ***Roe v. Wade*** (**1973**), the Court had prohibited states from making laws that interfered with a woman's right to an abortion during the early months of pregnancy.  In ***Webster v. Reproductive Health Services*** (**1989**), the Supreme Court approved a Missouri law that imposed certain restrictions on abortion, signaling that a state could legislate in an area in which *Roe* had previously forbidden them to legislate.  In ***Planned Parenthood v. Casey*** (**1992**), the Court ruled that states could restrict access to abortion as long they did not place an "undue burden" on the woman.

**George H. W. Bush and the End of the Cold War**

* In **1989**, thousands of **pro-democracy demonstrators** protested in **Tiananmen Square** in **China**.  In June of 1989, China's autocratic rulers brutally crushed the movement.
* In 1989, several communist regimes in Europe collapsed, including **Poland**,**Hungary**, **Czechoslovakia**, **East Germany**, and **Romania**.
* In **December 1989**, the **Berlin Wall** came down, and the two Germanys were reunited in **October 1990**.
* In **August 1991**, a **military** **coup** attempted to preserve the communist system by trying to overthrow **Gorbachev**. In December 1991, **Gorbachev resigned** as the Soviet Union's president, as the Soviet Union had dissolved into its component parts, 15 republics loosely confederated in the **Commonwealth of Independent States** (**CIS**), with Russia as the most powerful state. **Boris Yeltsin**, the president of the Russian Republic, was the dominant leader of the CIS. The demise of the Soviet Union **ended the Cold War**.
* Ethnic warfare broke out throughout the former Soviet Union. In **1991**, the **Chechen minority** tried to declare its independence from **Russia**, but Yeltsin sent in Russian troops.
* As a result of reduced defense spending after the Cold War, **America's** **economy** **suffered**.
* In **1990**, the white regime in **South Africa** freed African leader **Nelson Mandela**, who had served 27 years in prison for conspiring for overthrow the government.  Four years later, he was elected as South Africa's president.  In **1990**, free elections removed the **leftist** **Sandinistas** in **Nicaragua** from power.  In 1992, the civil war ended in **El Salvador**.

**The Persian Gulf Crisis**

* On August 2, 1990, **Iraqi** leader **Saddam Hussein** **invaded** **Kuwait**, seeking oil.  The United Nations Security Council condemned the invasion and on August 3, it demanded the immediate withdrawal of Iraq's troops.  After Hussein refused to comply by the mandatory date of **January 15, 1991**, the United States led a massive international military deployment, sending 539,000 troops to the Persian Gulf region.
* On **January 16, 1991**, the U.S. and the U.N. launched a 37-day air war against Iraq.  Allied commander, American general **Norman Schwarzkopf**, planned to bombing the Iraqis and then send in ground troops and armor. On **February 23**, the land war, "**Operation Desert Storm**," began.  It only lasted 4 days, and Saddam Hussein was forced to sign a cease-fire on **February 27**.
* Because the allies had only agreed to liberate Kuwait, Bush decided not to invade Baghdad to overthrow Saddam. Thus, Saddam stayed in power.

**Bush on the Home Front**

* President Bush signed the **Americans with Disabilities Act** (**ADA**) in **1990**, prohibiting discrimination against citizens with physical or mental disabilities.  In **1992**, he signed a major **water projects bill** that reformed the distribution of subsidized federal water in the West.  In 1990, Bush's Department of Education challenged the legality of college scholarships targeted for racial minorities.
* In **1991**, Bush nominated conservative African American **Clarence Thomas** to the **Supreme Court**. He opposed affirmative action. Thomas's nomination was approved by the Senate despite accusations from **Anita Hill** that Thomas had sexually harassed her.
* By 1992, the unemployment rate had exceeded 7% and the federal budget deficit continued to grow. Bush was forced to increase taxes to generate revenue for the federal government.

**Bill Clinton:  The First Baby-Boomer President**

* For the **election of 1992**, the Democrats chose **Bill Clinton** as their candidate (despite accusations of womanizing and draft evasion) and **Albert Gore, Jr**. as his running mate.  The Democrats tried a new approach, promoting growth, strong defense, and anticrime policies, while campaigning to stimulate the economy.
* The Republicans dwelled on "family values" and selected Bush for the presidency and **J. Danforth Quayle** for the vice presidency.
* Third party candidate, **Ross Perot** entered the race and ended up winning 19,237,247 votes, although he won no Electoral votes.
* **Clinton** **won** the election of 1992. Democrats also gained control of both the House and the Senate.
* Presidency Clinton hired **minorities** and more **women** in Congress and his presidential cabinet. This included the first female attorney general, **Janet Reno**, Secretary of Health and Human Services, **Donna Shalala**, and **Ruth Bader Ginsburg** in the Supreme Court

**A False Start for Reform**

* Clinton called for accepting homosexuals in the armed forces, but he had to settle for a "**don't ask, don't tell**" policy that unofficially accepted gays and lesbians.
* Clinton appointed his wife, **Hillary Rodham Clinton**, to revamp the nation's health and medical care system.  When the plan was revealed in October 1993, critics blasted it as cumbersome, confusing, and stupid.  The previous image of Hillary as an equal political partner of her husband changed to a liability.
* In **1993**, Clinton passed the **Brady Bill**, a gun-control law named after presidential aide **James Brady**, who had been shot in President Reagan's attempted assassination.
* By **1998**, Clinton's policies had led to **budget surplus** and he had **shrunk** the **federal** **deficit** to its lowest levels in ten years.
* On February 26, 1993, a radical Muslim group bombed the **World Trade Center** in New York, killing six people.  On April 19, 1993, a standoff at **Waco, Texas** between the government and the **Branch Davidian cult**ended in a fire that killed 82 people. On April 19, 1995, **Timothy McVeigh** bombed a federal building in**Oklahoma City**, killing 169 people.

**The Politics of Distrust**

* In 1994, **Newt Gingrich** led Republicans on an attack of Clinton's liberal failures with a conservative "**Contract with America**."  That year, Republicans won eight more seats in the Senate and 53 more seats in the House, where Gingrich became the new Speaker of the House.
* A conservative Congress passed the **Welfare Reform Bill**, which made cuts to welfare programs.
* In 1995, the government shut down when Congress could not agree on a budget.
* In the **election of 1996**, Clinton beat Republican **Bob Dole**.  **Ross Perot**, the third party candidate, again finished third.

**Clinton Again**

* During his second term, Clinton was more of a political moderate.
* The economy was booming in the late 1990s due to the Federal Reserve Board's low interest rates and the growth of Internet business.
* **The North American Free Trade Agreement**(**NAFTA**) was passed in 1993, and it created a**free-trade zone** between Mexico, Canada, and the United States. (It eliminated tariffs between the countries).
* The **World Trade Organization** (**WTO**) was created in 1994, and it promoted trade between the participating countries. It was supported by Clinton.
* Clinton fought for two domestic issues during his second term: the fight against **tobacco companies** and the fight for**gun control**.

**Problems Abroad**

* Clinton struggled to develop an American foreign policy that wasn't centered around fighting communism.
* Clinton sent troops to Somalia, but eventually withdrew them. Clinton initially criticized China for its human rights abuses, but he eventually supported China when he realized how important trade with China was to America.
* Clinton committed American troops to NATO to keep the peace in the former **Yugoslavia**.
* Clinton led the 1993 reconciliation meeting between Israel's **Yitzhak Rabin** and Palestinian **Yasir Arafat** at the White House.  Two years later, though, Rabin was assassinated, ending hopes for peace in the Middle East.

**Scandal and Impeachment**

* In 1998, it was discovered that President Clinton had an affair with a White House intern, Monica Lewinsky (**Lewinsky Affair**). Clinton lied about the affair under oath. The House Republicans passed two articles of **impeachment** against Clinton: perjury before a grand jury and obstruction of justice.
* In 1999, the Senate voted to remove Clinton from office, but the Republicans failed to obtain the 2/3 majority that was required.

**Clinton's Legacy**

* The American economy prospered during Clinton's era in large part because of the global economic expansion.
* Just prior to leaving office, Clinton negotiated a deal to get immunity from possible legal action over the Lewinsky scandal.

**The Bush-Gore Presidential Battle**

* The Democrats nominal **Albert Gore** for president and **Joseph Lieberman** for vice president for the**election of 2000**. The Republicans nominated **George W. Bush** for president and **Dick Cheney** for vice president. Bush won nomination in large part because he was the son of former president George H. W. Bush.
* Bush supported returning the federal budget surplus back to the people through tax cuts and through giving money to private institutions who would help the poor. Gore supported smaller tax cuts and strengthening Social Security.
* The election was very close and the electoral votes of **Florida** would decide who won. For five weeks, it was uncertain who won Florida's ballots, some of which were defective or unreadable. The Supreme Court eventually ruled (on party lines) that **Bush had won the presidency**. Although Bush won more electoral votes, **Bush lost the popular vote**. (More people voted for Gore than for Bush.)

**Bush Begins**

* Although he entered office promising to be a uniter between the Democrats and Republicans, President Bush was a **very divisive president**. He strongly opposed welfare programs opposed environmentalist policies. He rejected the **Kyoto Treaty**, which was an international treaty aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. He enacted large tax cuts that, along with upcoming wars, turned a federal budget surplus into a massive budget deficit.

**Terrorism Comes to America**

* On **September 11, 2001**, **terrorists** hijacked four aircraft and crashed them into the World Trade Center Towers, the Pentagon, and rural Pennsylvania.
* **Al Qaeda**, which was based in **Afghanistan** and led by **Osama bin Laden**, was responsible for the attack.
* In October 2001, Congress passed the **Patriot Act**, which expanded the government's ability to monitor citizens' communication, and it allowed immigrants suspected of terrorism to be deported. In 2002, Congress created the **Department of Homeland Security** which sought to protect the nation's borders. Hundreds of immigrants were put into jail without formal charges.
* **Guantanamo Detection Camp** was created on the American military base in Cuba to hold captured Taliban fighters from Afghanistan.
* The attacks on September 11th coincided with the beginning of an economic recession.

**Bush Takes the Offensive Against Iraq**

* In January 2002, Bush created the "**axis of evil**," which included**Iraq**, **North Korea**, and **Iran**.
* Hussein had been harassing and dodging U.N. weapons inspectors for years. (Inspectors were supposed to be allowed in the country after the 1991 Persian Gulf War.)
* **Bush was determined to invade Iraq and overthrow its dictator, Saddam Hussein** (finish the job that his dad had started). Bush made a variety of false claims in his case for war against Iraq: Iraq had weapons of mass destruction; Iraq could be a democratic beacon for the Middle East; Iraq supported Al Qaeda.
* The **U.S. invaded Iraq**on **March 19, 2003**. Britain was America's only major ally in the invasion.Hussein was quickly defeated.
* On May 1, 2003, Bush made a speech in which he claimed that major combat operations in Iraq were complete.

**Owning Iraq**

* **Sectarian violence** spread throughout Iraq as violence erupted between **Sunni** and **Shia** Muslims. **Sunnis** were the **minority** in Iraq that had power under Saddam. The **Shia majority**took over after Saddam was overthrown. In retaliation for being displaced from power, many Sunnis turned to bombings and political assassinations.
* In April, 2004, it was discovered that Iraqi prisoners were being tortured in **Baghdad's Abu Ghraib** prison.

**Reelecting George W. Bush**

* For the election of 2004, the Republicans re-nominated Bush and the Democrats selected **John F. Kerry.**
* Bush supported the **No Child Left Behind Act** of 2002, which mandated sanctions against schools that failed to meet federal performance standards.
* Bush supported a constitutional amendment for banning gay marriage and he opposed stem cell research.
* **Bush won the election of 2004**.

**Bush's Second Term**

* Bush appointed two new conservative justices to the Supreme Court.
* In 2005, Vice President Dick Cheney's chief of staff was convicted of perjury in an investigation into who leaked the name of undercover CIA agent in retaliation against her antiwar husband.
* Also in 2005, it was discovered that the government was **illegally wiretapping** American citizens' communications.
* The Federal Emergency Management Agency (**FEMA**) responded poorly to help New Orleans after **Hurricane Katrina** in 2005.

**Midterm Elections of 2006**

* Anti-Republican sentiment helped Democrats win majorities in the House and Senate in the midterm elections of 2006.
* By 2005, most of the American public opposed the war in Iraq. By 2008, Bush's approval rating was below 30%.

**The Presidential Election of 2008**

* **Barack Obama** beat Hillary Clinton to win the Democrat's presidential nomination for the election of 2008. The Republicans nominated **John McCain** for president and **Sarah Palin** for vice president. McCain had extensive experience in government, while Palin had no experience and was not politically astute.
* Another **recession** hit the American economy in **2008**. It was caused by a bursting**housing bubble** and the private banking system's poor lending practices. Real estate prices and the stock market plummeted. The federal government responded by taking over the country's two biggest mortgage companies,**Fannie Mae**and **Freddie Mac**, and by taking over the world's biggest insurance company, the **American International Group (AIG)**. Congress also passed the **Troubled Assets Relief Program (TARP)**to keep the nation's banks and businesses afloat.
* **Obama won the election of 2008**by a large margin.

**Obama in the White House**

* To jumpstart the economy, Obama supported the passage of the **American Relief and Recovery Act**. This was an economic stimulus bill that was comprised of tax cuts, spending for jobs programs, and funding for state and local governments.
* The economy started to recover from the "**Great Recession**" by 2009.
* Obama supported a healthcare reform bill in 2010 called the **Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act**. Most notably, this required all Americans to buy health insurance and prohibited health insurers from denying coverage to people with pre-existing conditions.
* In 2010, Obama signed the **Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act**. This overhauled the nation's financial regulatory system.

**A Sea of Troubles**

* The "**Tea Party**" emerged in 2009 as a right-wing, ultra-Republican party. They vehemently opposed most of Obama's policies.
* In 2010, Obama helped repeal the military's "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy and he renewed a nuclear arms reduction treaty with Russia.

**Wars, Oil Spills, and Political Backlash**

* By 2011, Obama had withdrawn all American combat troops from Iraq. Afghan insurgents made Afghanistan very unstable and made it difficult for American troops to leave.
* On April 20, 2010, BP's **Deepwater Horizon oil platform**exploded in the Gulf of Mexico, pouring billions of gallons of oil into the Gulf. This was the **worst oil disaster**in American history.
* **Osama bin Laden was killed**by American forces in Pakistan in 2011.