

Chapter 40: The Resurgence of Conservatism, 1980-1992

I. Ronald Reagan

A. Background

1. Prior to his political career, Reagan was an actor in the 1940s
2. He also served as Governor of California

B. Election of 1980

1. The Democrats nominated Carter
2. The Republicans nominated Reagan
 - a. Reagan easily won the election (489 electoral votes to 49)

C. The Conservatism of the 1980s

1. Between the 1960s and the 1980s the conservative movement became much stronger
 - a. There was a move away from the liberalism of the 1960s
 - b. Americans began to resent the cost of entitlement programs
 - c. Taxes and inflation were high
 - d. Groups began to resent big government, New Deal liberalism, gun control, feminism, gay rights, welfare, affirmative action, abortion, and drug use
 - i. It was believed these issues undermined family and religious values

2. Goals of the conservative movement:

- a. Decreasing the size of the federal government and decreasing government spending
- b. Promoting morality and values
- c. Stimulating businesses through fewer government regulations and lower taxes
- d. Strengthening national defense

3. The **New Right** developed—they were concerned with cultural, social, and moral issues

- a. Favored school prayer
- b. Opposed the ERA
- c. The **Religious Right** reacted against *Roe v. Wade* and started the right to life movement
- d. Marked by **religious leaders** as well: **Jerry Falwell** and the **Christian Right** formed the **Moral Majority** (1979): financed campaigns to unseat liberal members of Congress
 - i. He was also a televangelist

e. New Right leaders such as Pat Robertson formed the Christian Broadcasting Network to share his message (televangelist)

f. Economically speaking they favored less government involvement in society, lower taxes for individuals and corporations (also Reaganomics), and the deregulation of some industries (banking and airlines)

D. Reagan's First Term (1981-1985)

1. Reagan wanted to downsize the government and cut government spending on social programs
2. Instituted **Reaganomics**—this policy relied on **supply-side economics** which emphasized cutting taxes so people had the incentive to work hard and save money
 - a. If taxes were cut and government spending was reduced, the idea was that investment for businesses/the private sector would lead to an increase in production, jobs, and prosperity

- i. This was the opposite of what FDR did with Keynesian economics
 - b. Reaganomics brought about a decrease in inflation and interest rates as time went on
 - c. The money Reagan was able to cut from social programs was used to increase **military spending**
 - i. Between 1981 and 1984 the Department of Defense budget doubled
3. The **Economic Recovery Act of 1981** cut personal income taxes 25% over three years and there was also a corporate tax cut
 - a. In addition, the top income tax rate was reduced to 28%
 4. **Deregulated major industries** such as the airline industry and the savings and loan industry
 5. The nation suffered the worst recession since the 1930s in 1982
 - a. Unemployment hit 11%; inflation eventually decreased to 4% (a huge reduction from the double digits of the 1970s)
 - b. The economy recovered but this only increased the gap between the rich and the poor

II. Reagan's Second Term (1985-1989)

A. Reelected

1. Reagan was easily reelected in 1984 (525 electoral votes to 13 for Walter Mondale)

B. Domestic Affairs

1. The growing federal budget deficit was a concern (over **\$200 billion**) but economic growth was slow
 - a. A new system of taxation was included which helped to reduce the deficit
 - i. Later, in 1987 taxes would be increased for corporations and the wealthy
2. **The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986**
 - a. An attempt to stop illegal immigration by penalizing employers of undocumented aliens
 - b. Provided amnesty to some immigrants who had arrived before January 1, 1982

C. The Soviet Union and the Cold War

1. In March 1983 Reagan announced the **Strategic Defense Initiative** (SDI or "Star Wars")
 - a. A missile defense system which he hoped would make the U.S. invulnerable to nuclear missile attack by the Soviet Union
2. In 1985 Mikhail **Gorbachev** became the new leader of the USSR
 - a. Two of his key policies were **glasnost**, or openness, and **perestroika**, or restructuring, to help revitalize the Soviet economy
 - b. He was seen as very charismatic and was committed to reforming the Soviet Union
3. Reagan also met with Gorbachev several times during his presidency as they wanted to eliminate ground-launched nuclear weapons

D. The Reagan Doctrine

1. **Reagan Doctrine**: the U.S. also took an increasingly hard line against communist influences in **Latin America**
2. This often led to the controversial support of **anti-communist military dictatorships** with poor human rights records

3. In 1983 Reagan ordered a formal military invasion of the small island nation of **Grenada** after it underwent a Communist coup

E. Iran-Contra Affair (Scandal)

1. A major scandal; led to investigation of the Reagan administration's role in the covert support of wars in Iran and Nicaragua in what became known as the Iran-Contra Affair (1986)

2. Background: In **1981** Reagan cut all aid to **Nicaragua**—he felt it was under the influence of the **Soviets** and it would cause **revolutions** in other Latin American nations

a. Reagan **no longer** would **support** the **Sandinistas** and instead gave all of his **support** to a group called the **Contras** since they were anti-communist

b. The CIA was helping the Contras without permission from Congress who had banned military aid to the Contras

3. In 1983 a pro-Iranian group took American hostages in Lebanon

a. Iran was in the middle of a war with Iraq and Reagan urged U.S. allies to refuse to sell any arms to Iran

4. In 1986 it was revealed that the Reagan Administration secretly sold military parts and ammunition to Iran

a. In exchange, the Iranian government was going to work to free the U.S. citizens who were being held hostage by a pro-Iranian group in Lebanon

b. The money raised from the sale of the military supplies was then given to the Nicaraguan Contras

c. This operation was managed by a subgroup of the National Security Council (NSC), under President Reagan's direct control

5. **Lt. Oliver North** had handled the Iran-Contra deal for the NSC and received a partial-immunity deal for testifying against the president—he claimed the president and plenty of other officials knew of the Iran-Contra deal

6. Reagan claimed he did not know about the illegal division of funds to the Contras

F. Reagan and the Supreme Court

1. Reagan used the courts as his instrument against affirmative action and abortion

2. Reagan also nominated three conservative-minded judges, one of which was **Sandra Day O'Connor, the first female Supreme Court Justice** in U.S. history (others were Antonin Scalia and Anthony Kennedy)

IV. George H.W. Bush

A. 1988 Election

1. 1988: Bush (Reagan's VP) ran against Democrat Michael Dukakis

a. Bush won with 426 electoral votes

B. End of the Cold War: The Fall of Communism in Europe

1. The **Solidarity** movement in Poland helped to overthrow its communist government

2. Communism also fell in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and East Germany

3. The **Berlin Wall** fell in late 1989

a. On October 3, 1990 Germany was officially reunified

4. In December 1991 14 non-Soviet republics declared their independence

- a. Gorbachev resigned as president and the Soviet Union was dissolved
- b. The **Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)** took the place of the now extinct Soviet Union
- c. **Boris Yeltsin** was the leader of Russia after the breakup of the Soviet Union (1991-1999)

B. Bush's Administration (1989-1993)

1. Had to deal with a crisis in the savings and loan industry, as many failed
2. In 1990 he raised taxes although in his campaign he had promised not to
 - a. His goal was to reduce the federal deficit (which topped \$250 billion)
3. Unemployment was at 7% (1992)
4. Signed the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990 to prevent discrimination against those with physical or mental disabilities
5. Nominated Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court, which stirred up controversy
6. In 1992 4 police officers in CA were not guilty of the assault of Rodney King and riots broke out in Los Angeles
 - a. Bush sent troops to restore order
7. Bush sent troops to **Panama** to overthrow dictator **Manuel Noriega** (later convicted of drug trafficking and sent to prison) in an effort to establish a new government
8. Met with Gorbachev and both agreed to get rid of their chemical weapons
9. In July 1991, Bush and Gorbachev signed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, now called **START I**
 - a. Both countries agreed to reduce the number long-range nuclear bombers and missiles by two-third over the next 7 years
 - b. Later the U.S. also took its short-range nuclear weapons out of service and the Soviets followed suit
10. Bush also established diplomatic relations with all former Soviet republics
11. Bush signed **NAFTA** in December 1992 (eliminated tariffs with Canada and Mexico)
 - a. Took effect in 1994
12. Sent troops to **Somalia** in 1992 to aid with distribution of food in the wake of mass starvation

C. Persian Gulf War (1991)

1. In the 1980s Iran and Iraq fought a prolonged war
 - a. After the war Hussein had a heavy war debt
 - i. **August 2, 1990** Saddam Hussein authorized the **invasion of Kuwait**—an oil rich nation
2. The UN Security Council authorized coalition members to “use all necessary means” to expel Iraq from Kuwait if Iraq did not withdraw by January 15, 1991
 - a. The Persian Gulf War began the following day as President Bush authorized **Operation Desert Storm** to free Kuwait from the control of Iraq

- i. Air strikes were used and later ground forces were used
3. February 26: Hussein ordered his troops to leave Kuwait; the ground war ended two days later
4. Iraq accepted a cease-fire was established on April 6
 - a. Iraq promised to pay Kuwait for war damages
 - b. It agreed to destroy all its biological and chemical weapons and any facilities or materials it might have for producing nuclear weapons
5. After the war, Hussein was still in power—many believe the U.S. made a huge mistake by letting him remain in power
6. The U.S. worked to create a safe zone of Iraq's Kurds, a group who had been targeted by Hussein's regime

Chapter 41: America Confronts the Post-Cold War Era, 1992-2011

I. The Clinton Years

A. The 1992 Election

1. Republicans: George H.W. Bush
2. Democrats: William (Bill) Clinton
3. Independent: Ross Perot

4. Result: Clinton wins (370 to 168 electoral votes)
 - a. Perot received 20% of the popular vote but no electoral votes (best showing for a third party candidate since TR's Bull Moose run in 1912)

B. Clinton's First Administration (1993-1997)

1. Clinton was considered a "**New Democrat**" who focused on economic issues such as jobs, education, and health care
 - a. This also meant moving more toward the political center
2. Appointed women and minorities to his Cabinet including Attorney General Janet Reno
3. Also appointed a woman to the Supreme Court in 1993: Ruth Bader Ginsburg
4. One of the major things Clinton wanted to accomplish was **health care reform**
 - a. He put his wife in charge of this
 - b. The bill was presented to Congress in September 1993 but was considered "dead on arrival" and Congress never voted on the bill
5. The **balanced budget**: here, Clinton was successful
 - a. Worked with Congress to cut federal spending and balance the budget by 2002
 - b. The U.S. actually ran a surplus at one point too (national debt was \$5.5 trillion at this time—today it is \$16.7 trillion)
 - c. In November 1995 the federal government shut down for a week when the president and Congress could not compromise on the federal budget
6. Accepted the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy of allowing gays in the military as it was not required to volunteer information about sexual orientation
7. Much of Clinton's success can be attributed to the **booming economy** of the 1990s

8. Whitewater: Clinton was accused of improperly dealing with money from the Whitewater Development Company (real estate deal)

a. A special prosecutor investigated but nothing really came of it (1994)

9. The Brady Bill: passed by Congress in 1993; required people to wait five working days between the time they bought a handgun and the time they took possession of it

10. Signed a Welfare Reform Bill in 1996: cut welfare grants; signed reluctantly by Clinton

11. Other events

a. World Trade Center Bombing, 1993

i. Killed 6, injured around 1,000

b. Oklahoma City Bombing, 1995

i. The Federal Building was destroyed with a bomb and 168 people died

ii. Timothy McVeigh was found guilty of the bombing (executed in 2001)

c. Waco, Texas

i. Standoff that occurred between federal agents and the Branch Davidians, led by David Koresh

d. Columbine, 1999

i. High school shooting in Colorado (13 killed)

12. NAFTA: North American Free Trade Agreement (January 1, 1994)

a. Brought Mexico into the free trade agreement with U.S. and Canada

13. Foreign Affairs

1. Clinton sent peacekeeping forces to Somalia but withdrew U.S. forces in 1995

2. No action taken in response to the **Rwandan genocide**

3. Sent troops to **Haiti** to restore President Aristide to office

4. Sought a trade relationship with **China** and accomplished this goal

5. Committed U.S. forces to **NATO** to assist with the ethnic conflict in **Bosnia**

6. When Slobodan Milosevic began more ethnic cleansing in **Kosovo** (of Albanians) U.S. led NATO forces attacked Serbia

7. In 1993 Clinton hosted a meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak **Rabin** and PLO leader Yasser **Arafat**

a. The push was for Palestinian self-rule

b. When Rabin was killed two years later this seemed much less likely to occur

8. North Korea was developing nuclear weapons but agreed to stop after negotiations with the U.S. took place (it started its program again shortly thereafter)

C. Gingrich and the Contract with America

1. Gingrich: Republican congressmen who tried to take advantage of Clinton's failed programs
 - a. The Contract with America focused on 10 things that the Republicans would do if they won control of Congress

2. In the 1994 midterm elections the Republicans controlled both houses of Congress (for the first time since 1954)
 - a. And, Gingrich was selected as the Speaker of the House

D. Clinton's Second Term (1997-2001)

1. 1996 Election

- a. Democrats: Clinton
- b. Republicans: Bob Dole
- c. Clinton won: 379 electoral votes to 159

2. Domestic Affairs

- a. More negotiations on the budget took place as Clinton worked to reduce the deficit
- b. Clinton appointed Madeline Albright as Secretary of State (first woman to hold this position)

3. Foreign Affairs

- a. Visited China and pushed for more democratic reforms (1998)
- b. Wanted more regulations on nuclear weapons after India and Pakistan tested their weapons (1998)
- c. Also ordered the launching of missile strikes on Iraq when it refused to cooperate with UN weapons inspections
- d. NATO engaged in air attacks against Yugoslavia in response to their attempts to kill Albanians
 - i. The U.S. sent troops in 1999 as a part of the peacekeeping effort
- e. China and the U.S. established normal trade relations in order to open markets
- f. Advocated the formation of the WTO in 1999

4. Clinton's Impeachment

- a. Monica Lewinsky: Clinton was accused of having an inappropriate relationship with a White House intern
 - i. At first Clinton denied any wrongdoing with "that woman"
 - ii. Later, he came clean but still denied lying under oath
 - iii. The **Starr Report** (compiled by special prosecutor Kenneth Starr) revealed the details of Clinton's affair/wrongdoing
 - iv. Prior to this, in the late 1990s, there was a sexual harassment case filed against Clinton by Paula Jones that drew a lot of attention

- b. December 1998: the House passed 2 articles of **impeachment** against Clinton: perjury before a grand jury and obstruction of justice
 - i. In the end, the Senate fell short of the 67 votes needed to convict Clinton and remove him from office

II. The George W. Bush Administration

A. The Disputed 2000 Election

1. Democrats chose Clinton's VP, Al Gore
2. The Republicans chose George W. Bush, Governor of Texas

3. This election was extremely close
 - a. The popular vote in Florida was so close that whoever won the state's electoral votes would in fact win the presidency
 - b. A recount of votes took place over issues related to the closeness of the election and the "hanging chad" issue
4. In the end, the case, ***Bush v. Gore***, went to the Supreme Court
 - a. The Court ruled **5-4** to stop the Florida recount since the manual recount lacked uniform standards and violated equal protection for voters
 - i. Florida's electoral votes were awarded to Bush (271 to 266)

B. Bush's First Administration (2001-2005)

1. 9/11: tested Bush as president
 - a. Signed an anti-terrorism law into effect in October 2001: **The Patriot Act**
 - i. Allowed foreigners to be detained for 7 days without being charged with a crime
 - b. Created the **Department of Homeland Security**
2. The reaction to 9/11 also led to U.S. involvement in **Afghanistan**—whose government was believed to be harboring Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda (deemed responsible for the 9/11 attacks)
 - a. **Al Qaeda** was disrupted in 2002 by the U.S. but bin Laden was still on the loose
3. In January 2002 Iraq, Iran, and North Korea were deemed the "axis of evil" by Bush
4. Education (2002): No Child Left behind (NCLB)
 - a. Focused on more accountability of the states to the succeed of students and called for mandatory achievement testing
5. In 2003, Bush signed a **\$350 billion tax cut** in an effort to stimulate the economy (this coming after a \$1.35 trillion tax cut that was passed by Congress in 2001)
 - a. The economy had struggled since 9/11
 - b. Deficits grew larger due to military spending, tax cuts, and increased homeland security costs
6. **Medicare was expanded** in 2003 to aid seniors in paying for prescription drugs
7. **War in Iraq (2003)**
 - a. The war on terror was expanded into Iraq in 2003
 - b. Bush feared Saddam Hussein was supplying terrorists with WMDs and Hussein refused to comply with UN arms inspections
 - i. Hussein did not comply and the U.S. ended its use of diplomacy with Iraq
 - ii. In March 2003 U.S. and British forces invaded Iraq
 - aa. Within a month, Iraq's forces were defeated and Hussein went into hiding
 - bb. **No WMDs were found**
 - cc. In December 2003 Hussein was found hiding underground
 - ii. Hussein was found guilty of crimes against humanity and was executed in 2006

C. Bush's Second Administration (2005-2009)

1. 2004 Election

- a. Republicans nominated Bush
- b. Democrats nominated John Kerry (Massachusetts Senator)
- c. Bush won (286 electoral votes to 252)

2. Domestic Affairs

- a. Bush wanted to address Social Security and continue to fight terrorism

- b. **Hurricane Katrina:** August 2005 (1,300 died)

- c. Supreme Court: Bush nominated John G. Roberts, Jr. to replace Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist
 - i. He later nominated Samuel Alito to replace the retiring Sandra Day O'Connor (both were confirmed by the Senate)

- d. **Immigration Reform:** In October 2006, Bush signed into law a bill to erect a 700-mile fence along sections of the U.S.-Mexico border after other immigration reform could not be agreed up between the House and the Senate

- e. **The Economy: slowed majorly in 2007**
 - i. Housing prices were down and foreclosures became much more common
 - ii. Bush responded in February 2008: Congress passed a \$168-billion economic stimulus package (granted taxpayers rebates and cut taxes for businesses)

- f. In 2008 the attention went to the mortgage industry
 - i. In September 2008 the government took over Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac (private corporations that bought mortgages from banks and other lenders)

- g. In October 2008 things became worse: Congress passed a **\$700 billion bailout** plan for the financial industry
 - i. **The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act** allowed the U.S. Treasury to purchase bad debt from troubled banks and other lenders

- h. In December 2008 the U.S. government gave loans to the auto industry to help stabilize it

3. Foreign Affairs

- a. **Iraq:** The U.S. forces remained in Iraq to provide security during Iraq's transition to a constitutional government and Bush wanted to commit more forces to Iraq (and later did)

- b. **Afghanistan:** the U.S. continued its presence in Afghanistan to support of the Karzai government (who took control after the removal of the Taliban)

- c. **North Korea:** the U.S. sought to get North Korea to dismantle its nuclear program
 - i. 6 nations signed an agreement; in exchange, North Korea would get desperately needed economic aid

- d. The U.S. closely watched Iran as it continued its uranium development program

III. Barack Obama Becomes President

A. Background

1. Obama served as a state senator for Illinois until winning his U.S. Senate seat in 2003
2. Spoke at the Democratic Convention in 2004 on behalf of John Kerry (helped him get name recognition)
3. Announced in 2007 that he would seek the Democratic nomination for president
 - a. His biggest opponent for the nomination was Hillary Clinton

B. The 2008 Election

1. Obama vs. McCain—a very popular Republican and war hero (Obama won 365 to 173)

C. Obama's First Term (2009-2013): Domestic Affairs

1. Many voted for Obama based on his promise for change

2. He inherited a weak economy and many hoped he would be able to fix it
 - a. Unemployment was in the 10% range

3. Economic stimulus bill (The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act): signed by Obama in February 2009 to cut taxes and increase unemployment benefits

4. 2009: Appointed the first Hispanic, Sonia Sotomayor, to the Supreme Court
 - a. Appointed Elena Kagan to the Court in 2010

5. Worked hard to achieve health care reform

- a. In 2010 Obama signed **The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act** (also known as **Obamacare**)
 - i. This landmark legislation expanded Medicare coverage and offers more protections for people to obtain health care (goes into effect in stages)
 - ii. One big criticism is the cost (and that it will massively increase our national debt)
 - iii. Tea Party Republicans fought against this (they favored reducing government spending and lowering taxes)

6. The Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act instituted controls over banks and stock markets in an effort to prevent risky lending behaviors from occurring again

7. In 2010 Obama signed a law ending the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy which barred openly gay people from serving in the military

8. In 2011 raising the nation’s debt limit became an issue and a bill was signed that raised the **debt ceiling** (and also resulted in the lowering the credit rating of U.S. government bonds for the first time ever)

9. In 2011 Obama continued his efforts to stimulate the economy with a job creation plan as well as tax cuts for the middle class and increases for the wealthy

10. 2012: Obama made some provisions for undocumented immigrants to apply for work permits and avoid deportation (follow up to the failed DREAM Act of 2010)

11. June 2012: the Supreme Court reviewed the constitutionality of Obamacare and it was upheld

12. November 2012: The nation was close to going over the “fiscal cliff”

- a. Negotiations with Congress were tedious and went right to the bitter end
- b. In January 2013 a bill was signed to avoid automatic tax increases and spending cuts

D. Foreign Affairs

1. Obama withdrew troops from Iraq (June 2009)
 - a. By August 2010 all U.S. combat troops had left Iraq
2. More troops were sent to Afghanistan (2009)
 - a. Many pressed Obama to set a date for the complete withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan
3. Tensions heightened in Libya as protests occurred against the nation's leader, Gadhafi
 - a. Later, there was an incident in **Benghazi, Libya**, where some Americans were killed (later it was revealed that the attacks were linked to Al Qaeda and this sparked controversy)
4. **May 1, 2011**: Obama announced on national TV that Osama bin Laden had been killed
5. In 2012 the U.S. cut food aid to North Korea as a response to the testing of a rocket (which violated UN sanctions)

E. 2012 Election

1. Obama defeated Mitt Romney 332 to 206 electoral votes
2. ***Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010)*** was a focal point when it came to campaign spending; basically, it allowed super-PACS to develop and provide unlimited funding to candidates

F. Obama's Second Term Highlights

1. In ***Shelby County v. Holder (2013)*** Section 4 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was declared unconstitutional (the Court held that the formula for determining whether changes to a state's voting procedure should be federally reviewed were outdated and did not reflect the changes that have occurred in the last 50 years in narrowing the voting turnout gap in the states in question)
2. The government shutdown in October 2013 due to the inability to compromise on the budget (and, as a response of Republicans to its dislike of Obamacare and the opening of the health care marketplace)
3. Part of the **Defense of Marriage Act (2013)** was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court
 - a. The Court declared that gay couples married in states where it is legal must receive the same federal health, tax, Social Security benefits that traditional couples receive
4. August 2015: the U.S. Embassy in **Cuba** was reopened and diplomatic ties were reestablished between the two nations