Chapter 32.1

The Conservative Resurgence

The Conservative Movement Grows

Two Views: Liberal and Conservatives

Two major political parties in the United States in the late twentieth century were the Democrats, many of whom were "liberals", and the Republicans, who were often labeled "conservatives."

Liberals generally favored government intervention to help the needy.

Conservatives generally favored allowing the free market, private organizations, and individuals to do that.

The Ideas and Goals of Liberalism

In the late 1970’s, liberals tended to believe that the federal government should play a significant role in improving the lives of all Americans.

They valued social programs that helped the poor, unemployed, elderly, and others.

They also sponsored laws that protected the rights of minorities and women, especially in the post-WW II period.

They supported greater government regulation of industry.

In the foreign policy realm, liberals tended to favor cooperating with international organizations like the United Nations.

The Ideas and Goals of Conservatism

In contrast, some conservatives felt that a large central government endangered economic growth and individual choice.

They felt the liberal policies of the 1960's and the 1970's left a legacy of rising inflation and enormous waste.

They sought reduce taxes and limit government regulation of industry in order to promote economic growth.

Other conservatives, neoconservatives or traditionalists, warned about the dangers posed to society by abandoning traditional values in favor of the new freedoms exemplified by the counterculture and advertised by the mass media.

This concern with the perceived degeneration of modern youth dovetailed with many conservatives' religious beliefs.

Anticommunism formed the third leg of modern conservatism.

They questioned the wisdom of the détente policy followed by Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter.
They also fought against SALT II treaty in the Senate.

**The Conservative Movement Gains Strength**

During the 1940’s and 1950’s both parties developed a bipartisan foreign policy aimed at containing communism. Both favored a relatively significant role for government in domestic affairs.

However, during the 1960’s and 1970’s, many Republicans became increasingly critical of the liberal policies of the Democrats.

They advanced a new conservative agenda.

The differences between the two parties grew more pronounced.

The New Right, as the resurgent conservative movement was called, grew rapidly and was a coalition of several different groups with varying ideas and goals.

**Two Viewpoints: Liberal and Conservative**

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<td><strong>Economy</strong></td>
<td>• social programs (often leading to higher taxes)</td>
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<td><strong>Foreign Policy</strong></td>
<td>Favored international diplomacy to combat communism in other countries</td>
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**Liberalism Loses Its Appeal**

One reason for the revival of the Republican Party was the unraveling of the Democratic Party.

The Vietnam War and urban riots of the 1960’s divided the same people who rallied around President Johnson’s vision of the Great Society.

The rise of the counterculture had alienated many mid-western Americans and white conservative Christians in the South.

Watergate, the oil crisis of the 1970’s, and the Iran hostage crisis further weakened the public’s faith in the federal government.

Shifts in the economy and the decline of northern industries, dampened America’s optimism about the future.

When the economy stagnated, liberal ideas lost their pull and conservative beliefs became more attractive.
The New Right Criticizes Liberal Programs

Many conservatives believed that liberal policies were responsible for stagflation and other economic problems of the late 1970’s.

They believed that government taxed citizens and businesses too heavily and spent too much on the wrong programs.

They complained about unfunded mandates, programs required but not paid for by the federal government.

Some criticized federal welfare programs, arguing they rewarded the lack of interest.

They felt that the Great Society made the problem of poverty worse not better.

They believed that welfare contributed to the rise in the number of children born out of wedlock and therefore encouraged the decline of the traditional family, consisting of a married father and mother and their children.

They also felt affirmative action programs went too far and contributed to reverse discrimination.

Another group supporting the conservative platform was the “Sagebush Rebels.”

They were activists who believed the federal government controlled too much land in the western states.

They thought the federal government should give control of this land to the states, to be used to their best economic advantage.

Most environmentalists opposed the movement, not wanting to expose preserved lands to possible development.

Religious Participation Rises

At the same time, concern with the cultural change caused more religious groups to become actively involved in politics.

The Moral Majority, founded by Reverend Jerry Falwell in 1979, was a political organization working to fulfill religious goals.

The Moral Majority opposed the 1962 Supreme Court decision Engel vs Vitale, which forbade religious teaching in schools, as well as the historic 1973 Roe vs Wade decision, which legalized abortion.

It condemned the Equal Right Amendment and homosexuality.

The Moral Majority boosted the Republican Party’s chances of winning the presidency by registering 2 million new voters.

One of their tactics was to distribute Moral Majority “report cards” on candidates, which almost always favored Republicans.
Population Trends Boost Conservatism

Demographic, or population, trends also strengthened the conservative movement.

Historically, northern cities stood as the stronghold of Liberal Democrats.

When an increasing number of Americans moved to the suburbs, their attachment to liberalism waned as they struggled financially during tough economic days of the late 1970’s.

Republicans emphasized issues that they believed would convince moderate liberals to switch party allegiance.

Republicans also benefitted from the migration from the Rural Belt to the Sun Belt, which took place in the 1970’s, a historical realignment of white voters in the Deep South

Since the Civil War, most white southerners had voted for the Democratic Party.

With civil rights legislation, many white southerners began to shift their party allegiance.

By the 1980’s, the Republicans had become the dominant party in the region.

Reagan Wins the Presidency

The growing conservative movement swept the Republican candidate, Ronald Reagan to victory in the 1980 election.

Reagan made clear his opposition to big government, support for a strong military, and his faith in traditional values.

He also radiated optimism, convincing Americans that he would usher in a new era of prosperity and patriotism.

He was known as a "B" or low rate movie actor. Best known for his starring role in Knute Rockne. A film based on the life of Notre Dame’s legendary football coach.

He then served two terms as the governor of California.


Even though the Democrats maintained control of the House of Representatives, Republicans captured their US Senate for the first time since 1955.

The conservatives were back.
32.2 The Reagan Revolution

Focus Question: What were the major characteristics of the conservative Reagan Revolution?

Reaganomics Guides the Economy

Reagan and his advisors based their economic policies on the theory of “supply-side economics,” sometimes called “Reaganomics.”

The theory of supply-side economics rests on the assumption that if taxes are reduced, people will work more and have more money to spend, causing the economy to grow.

The government will then collect more taxes.

To cut taxes while still balancing the federal budget, however, Reagan also needed to reduce federal spending on programs favored by both Democrats and Republicans.

New Policies to Boost the Economy

Congress approved most of Reagan’s plan to institute supply-side economics by passing the Economic Recovery Act of 1981, which reduced taxes by 25% over three years.

The richest Americans received the largest tax cuts.

Reagan justified this move by saying that the wealthy would use the money they saved to invest in new businesses, which would help everyone.

Reagan also convinced Congress to cut about $40 billion from the federal budget, mostly by cutting spending for social programs.

In addition to cutting taxes, Reagan also reduced the government’s role in the economy by calling for deregulation, or the removal of government control over industry.

By the mid-1980’s, Congress deregulated the airline, telecommunications, and banking industries.

The Reagan administration also cut funding for federal agencies that oversaw many other industries.

Recession and Recovery

Despite Reagan’s economic policies, the economy experienced a severe recession from 1980 to 1982.

Unemployment rose to more than 10% in 1982.

The recession hit the blue-collar workers the hardest.

Many farmers, facing overseas competition, lost their farms.

Beginning in early 1983, the economy began to turn around.
Inflation fell dramatically.

The Gross National Product, or the annual income earned by Americans and American businesses, expanded at a healthy pace. Despite this, the number of poor people, including the working poor, actually increased. In addition, immigrants from Latin America and Asia continued to pour into the US.

7.3 million legal immigrants and hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants entered the country in the 1980’s.

The richest percentage of Americans grew richer.

Problems With Budget Deficits

Reagan increased defense spending but failed to win huge cuts in government spending in other areas. This caused the federal deficit, or the shortfall between the amount of money spent and the amount of money taken in by the government, to skyrocket from about $79 billion in 1981 to more than $221 billion in 1986.

The national debt, the amount of money the federal government owes to owners of government bonds, rose to $2.5 trillion.

In response to persistent budget deficits, Congress passed the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act in 1985. This act sought to balance the budget by 1990 by requiring automatic cuts in federal spending if the deficit exceeded a certain amount.

However, the federal budget deficit set new records into the early 1990’s.

The Saving and Loan, or S & L, crisis in 1989 exacerbated deficit problems.

In the late 1980’s, about 1,000 Savings and Loan banks failed, some because of fraudulent behavior and others because they made too many risky loans.

To prevent broader panic, the federal government spent upwards of $200 billion to bail out depositors at the failed banks.

Reagan’s deregulation policies were blamed as the cause.

Conservative Supreme Court Justices and Equal Access Act

During his two terms, Reagan appointed judges who he hoped would reverse the liberal drift of the federal courts.

He appointed three new Justices- Sandra Day O’Connor, Antonin Scalia, and Anthony Kennedy- to the Supreme Court and elevated William Rehnquist, a well-known conservative, to the position of Chief Justice in 1986.
Sandra Day O’Connor, nominated in 1981, was the first female Justice and a moderate conservative.

Although she voted with the other conservatives on many issues, she consistently voted to uphold *Roe vs Wade*, which Reagan opposed.

Near the end of Reagan’s first term, Congress passed the Equal Access Act.

This act required public secondary schools to allow any group equal access to school facilities.

Conservative Christian groups supported the act’s passage because many public schools did not allow religious groups to meet on school property.

The Supreme Court confirmed the constitutionality of the Equal Access Act in 1990 in *Board of Education of Westside Community Schools vs Mergens*.

**Confronting Challenging Issues**

Despite Reagan and Bush’s success, the nation continued to face a number of pressing problems.

In 1981 when thousands of air-traffic controllers went on strike, Reagan refused to negotiate with the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization (PATCO) and fired the striking workers because they violated a law forbidding federal employees from striking.

Many Americans admired Reagan’s strong stance, although some union supporters claimed that Reagan’s action represented an assault on the labor movement.

In the 1980’s, the rising cost of Social Security caused concern.

As the number of elderly people in America grew, the Social Security system began to collect less money than it paid out.

In 1983, Reagan signed the Social Security Reform Act, which raised the minimum retirement age and increased payroll taxes for social security.

It provided a temporary fix but did not solve the long-term problems of Social Security.

Many Americans also worried about the state of America’s public education system.

In 1983, the Department of Education issued *A Nation at Risk*.

This study showed that students were consistently scoring lower on standardized tests as time passed.

The report argued that America's schools failed to prepare students adequately to compete with students from around the globe.

Even before the report appeared, conservatives called for providing vouchers, or government checks, that could be used by parents to pay tuition at private schools.

Conservatives argued that vouchers would force public schools to improve in order to attract and retain students.
Liberals in Congress argued that vouchers would take much-needed money away from public schools.

In addition the nation faced the threat of a new disease, Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), which first appeared in 1981.

AIDS is the last stage of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which attacks the immune system of its victims.

There is no known cure.

At first, AIDS spread mainly among homosexual men and intravenous drug users.

President Reagan responded slowly to the AIDS epidemic, but President George H.W. Bush funding for research rose substantially.
#2.3 The End of the Cold War

Focus Question: What were Reagan’s foreign policies, and how did they contribute to the fall of communism in Europe?

Reagan Challenges Communism

President Reagan believed that the United States needed to weaken communism by challenging it as much as possible without provoking war.

To this end, he devised policies aimed at toppling communist nations, ranging from building new nuclear missile systems to funding covert operations against Soviet troops and allies around the globe.

Reagan Builds Up the U.S. Military

Under Reagan, the United States committed itself to the largest peacetime military buildup in its history.

He dedicated billions of dollars to the development and production of B-1 and B-2 bombers, MX missile systems, and other projects.

The Reagan administration placed a new generation of nuclear missiles in Europe.

Reagan supported this massive military buildup, in part, because he did not believe that the Soviet Union could afford to spend as much on defense as the US could.

Reagan felt this applied particularly to the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), a proposed program in which land- and space-based lasers would destroy any missiles aimed at the US before they could reach their targets.

Some dubbed this missile program as “Star Wars”, and claimed it was unrealistic.

Reagan Aids Anticommunists

Reagan also sought to weaken the Soviet Union by supporting anticommunist rebellions around the globe.

The United States funded and trained the mujahedeen, an anti-Soviet rebel in Afghanistan.

Reagan's advisers believed that with US help, these guerillas could drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan.

In 1998, Soviet forces finally began to withdraw after years of fierce Afghan resistance.

Secretary of State Alexander Haig feared that the newly formed Sandinista government in Nicaragua provided the Soviets with a “safe house” in America's backyard.

To counter this threat, the administration backed a group of anticommunists counterrevolutionaries, known as the Contras.

At the same time, the US supported a right-winged government in El Salvador as it battled leftist rebels.

Many objected to this policy including US Ambassador Robert White who described the legal system in El Salvador as “rotten” and called on the US to suspend aid to the nation.
Instead Congress made funding El Salvador’s government dependent on the nation making progress on human rights.

In 1983, Reagan acted to counter another perceived threat in the Western Hemisphere.

Members of a radical leftist movement, with some help from Cuba, had violently ousted the Grenadian prime minister.

On October 25, 1983, US troops invaded Grenada to prevent the island from becoming a communists outpost and to protect the lives of American medical students.

Gorbachev Pursues Reform

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became president of the Soviet Union. He ushered in a new Soviet era by pursuing the twin policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

Glasnost meant “a new openness” and Perestroika stood for reforming the Soviet system— for instance, moving away from a socialist or state-controlled economy.

Gorbachev’s reforms created an opening for a shift in relations between the two superpowers.

He started these reforms mostly because the Soviet Union’s economy lay in shambles.

- The nation faced regular food shortages.
- Its factories and workers could not compete with their Western counterparts.
- A huge chunk of the Soviet’s economy’s money went towards paying for the military.
- The war in Afghanistan had drained the Soviet’s resources.
- He realized his nation could not match the military buildup initiated by the Reagan administration.

The Two Leaders Meet

Gorbachev’s policies and personality helped soften the Soviet Union’s international image.

Reagan responded to this change by moderating his own stance toward the Soviet Union.

The leaders would meet four times between 1985 and 1989.

At their final meeting Gorbachev allowed Reagan to address the students at Moscow State University on the free-enterprise system and democracy.

Even before the summit, the two nations had signed a historic nuclear arms pact and had begun negotiations on the START I Treaty, which would reduce the number of nuclear weapons in the world.

Communism Ends in Eastern Europe

More than any other event, the fall of the Berlin Wall symbolized the end of communism in Europe.
In November of 1989, following the fall of East Germany’s communist government, East German authorities opened the wall’s gates.

Communists also lost power in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania in 1989; Albania in 1990; and in Yugoslavia in 1991.

**The Soviet Union Breaks Apart**

In August 1991, hard-liners in the Soviet Union attempted to stage a coup in a last-gasp attempt to maintain communist rule.

But when millions of Russians, led by Boris Yeltsin, rallied in the streets of Moscow in support of Gorbachev, the coup fell apart.

Not long afterward, the Communist Party lost power, and the Soviet Union separated into 15 independent republics.

Boris Yeltsin became the new leader of the largest republic, the Russian Federation.

**Trouble Persists in the Middle East**

Even as the Soviet Union collapsed, the US continued to confront problems in the Middle East.

In 1982, Reagan sent a group of 800 US Marines to Lebanon as part of an international force trying to bring peace to a nation torn by civil war.

On October 23, 1983, a truck loaded with thousands of pounds of explosives smashed through the barriers at the headquarters of the US Marines in Beirut, Lebanon.

The explosion killed 241 marines.

Reagan withdrew the remaining marines in February 1984.

This incident illustrated the complicated nature of Middle Eastern politics.

During the 1980's, the US often clashed with Libya.

Led by Muammar al-Qaddafi, whom Reagan described as “the mad dog of the Middle East,” Libya supported terrorist groups.

After a bombing of a Berlin nightclub, which Reagan blamed Qaddafi, US warplanes bombed Libya, killing one of Qaddafi’s daughters.

Even though Qaddafi was unharmed, his criticism of the US dwindled.

Reagan’s presidency had started with the breakthrough in the Middle East, twenty minutes after he took the oath of office on January 20, 1981, Iran released all 52 Americans it held hostage since 1979. But during his second term, the Iran-Contra affair badly tarnished Reagan’s reputation.
The Iran-Contra affair began when the US sold weapons to Iran in 1985 in exchange for Iran's promise to pressure terrorist groups in Lebanon to release some American hostages.

The plan didn't work, and it contradicted the administration's policy of refusing to negotiate with terrorists.

Then, the administration used the money from the sale to fund the Contras in Nicaragua, despite the fact that Congress had banned sending funds to the Contras.

News of this broke in 1986.

Although Reagan took responsibility for the actions of his administration, he never admitted ordering his aides to support the Contras.

Ultimately, several leading administration officials and a top aide, Oliver North, were convicted on charges stemming from the scandal.

Many of the convictions were overturned on technical grounds.

In spite of this, Reagan left office with extremely high approval ratings.
Foreign Policy After the Cold War

Chapter 32 Section 4

A New Role in the World

- With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the US is the lone Superpower in the world.
- A new leader of the US was selected in the Election of 1988
- Candidates - George H.W. Bush (R) vs. Michael Dukakis (D)
- Bush was Reagan's VP, former Director of CIA, former US Ambassador to the UN, and a WWII vet.
- Bush wins in a landslide, 426 electoral votes to 111.

Latin America and the War on Drugs

- The government had been waging a “War on Drugs” by going after the sellers and users.
- The Bush Administration arrested and tried several international drug figures, including Eduardo Martinez Romero, a financier of Colombian drug cartel.
- A bigger target was Manuel Noriega, the dictator of Panama.
- Operation Just Cause
- The US launched a full-scale attack with twelve thousand troops on December 20, 1989
- Noriega fled to the Papal Embassy after four days of fighting before surrendering
- A Miami Court sentenced Noriega to forty years in jail for drug trafficking

China Cracks Down On Critics

- In the spring of 1989, Chinese students began staging prodemocracy protests in Tiananmen Square in Beijing.
- On June 4th, Chinese tanks rolled in Beijing, killed hundreds of protestors, crushed demonstrations, and imprisoned activists.
- The Bush Administration condemned this action and suspended arms sales to China.

Change comes to South Africa

- In the 1980’s, protests against apartheid grew in South Africa and around the world.
The leader of the antiapartheid movement, Nelson Mandela, had been imprisoned since 1962.

In the US, many private firms divested from South Africa. Congress imposed economic sanctions instead of fully divesting.

President Bush met with Mandela following his release from prison in 1990 and endorsed the drive to bring democracy to South Africa.

The apartheid was dismantled and Mandela was elected as the leader in 1994.

**Peacekeeping and Police Action**

- A bloody civil war took place in Yugoslavia, claiming the lives of 150,000 civilians.
- In 1992, Bush backed a UN plan to restore peace in Bosnia, one of the republics carved out of Yugoslavia.
- Operation Restore Hope to protect human rights in Somalia.

**Persian Gulf War**

- On August 2, 1990, Saddam Hussein and Iraq invaded the neighboring country of Kuwait.
- With Kuwait in his power, Hussein would control nearly 20% of the oil produced around the world.
- President Bush worked to build an international coalition and backed a UN resolution that demanded Iraqi troops withdraw.
- By fall of 1990, 700,000 troops assembled in Saudi Arabia including nearly 500,000 American forces.
- Britain, France, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, among others also sent troops.
- President Bush also was given permission by Congress to use force.
- General Colin Powell & General Norman Schwarzkopf devised and executed a strategy that began with five weeks of aerial bombing on Iraqi forces.
- Iraq tried to break up the coalition by firing Scuds at Israel
- These missiles did little serious damage, but many feared they were armed with chemical warheads.
On February 23, coalition forces stormed into Kuwait.

The Iraqi forces surrendered or fled, but set fire to many oil rigs along the way.

Less than five days after the ground war began, Iraq agreed to a UN cease-fire.

Iraqi forces lost over 25,000 men while American casualties were at 148.

The coalition forces did not continue on to Baghdad to topple Saddam Hussein after Iraqi forces were removed from Kuwait.