

Chapter 40 (14th)

The Resurgence of Conservatism

1. The Election of Ronald Reagan, 1980
 1. In the 1980 presidential campaign, the Democrats were in trouble from the beginning.
 1. President Carter sought reelection, but his image was hurt by double-digit inflation and bungling foreign affairs.
 2. The next Kennedy, **Edward (Ted) Kennedy** entered the race for the Democratic nomination. His campaign was damaged with the "Chappaquiddick incident" of 1969. After a night of partying, he'd driven his car off a bridge killing his female passenger, and then delayed reporting it.
 2. The Republicans had their opening and nominated **Ronald Reagan**—former movie star and former California governor.
 1. Reagan would be the oldest elected president. His traditional values were from the pre-60s generation.
 2. He favored small government, *laissez-faire* capitalism, a tough stance with Russia, personal responsibility, and "family values."
 1. These characteristics made up what came to be known as "neoconservatives."
 3. He was handsome, photogenic, and grand-fatherly. Having grown up in small-town Midwest America, Reagan had a real down-home nature that was appealing and friendly.
 3. Reagan had an appeal, but the "ABC" approach (Anyone but Carter) was likely the biggest factor in the voting. Reagan won in a landslide, 489 to 49 in the electoral.
 4. In Carter's farewell address, he encouraged disarmament, human rights, and environmental protect.
 1. One of his last acts was to sign a bill preserving 100 million acres in Alaska.
2. The Reagan Revolution
 1. Ironically, the hostages in Iran were released the exact day Reagan was sworn into office, January 20, 1981.
 2. Reagan put together a cabinet of the "best and the rightest." He wanted to make government smaller and get federal spending under control. In his view, the government did not fix problems, the government was the problem. This message was well-received by the 1980s.
 1. Movement away from the ideas of a "welfare state" and governmental "entitlement" programs. Californians had a "tax revolt" with Proposition 13 cutting property taxes and governmental services. This wave spread to D.C.
 3. Reagan proposed \$35 billion in budget cuts.
 1. Most of the cuts were in social programs like food stamps and federally paid-for job training programs.
 2. The Republican Senate went along, the Democratic House needed politics. Southern conservative Democrats in the House called "boll weevils" went along with Reagan. The lowered budget passed.
 4. Reagan was shot on March 6, 1981. Hit in the arm and lung, he recuperated and walked out of the hospital 12 days later.
3. The Battle of the Budget
 1. Reagan's next step was to make substantial tax cuts, about 25% across the board.
 1. Reagan's appeal on TV and help from the boll weevils passed this bill as well.
 2. The plan called for "**supply-side economics**" (AKA "**Reaganomics**") or policies that supported businesses, such as lower taxes and less government interference.
 1. Supply-side economics would boost investment, production, hiring, and eventually through growth, would reduce the federal deficit.
 3. The plan took a hit when economy slid to a recession, 1982. Unemployment rose to 11% and several banks went bankrupt.
 4. The blame-game was on.
 1. Democrats charged Reagan's cuts were to blame. They said the cuts were aimed at the poor and helped the rich.
 2. In fact, the "tight-money" anti-inflationary policies of President Carter were to blame for the economic downturn.
 5. The economy did turn around in 1983 and began to thrive. Supply-siders grinned.
 1. "**Yuppies**" (short for "young urban professionals" and a play on "hippies") went center-stage with their high success and indulgent materialism.
 2. On the bad side, the rich-poor gap did widen during the 80s.
 6. Reagan's massive military spending was also at play.
 1. Though he had a "spend-less" mentality, which did *not* apply to the military. Reagan wanted to beef up the military to stand strong against the U.S.S.R.
 2. The annual deficit (and thus the total debt) increased substantially under Reagan, almost exclusively due to military spending.
 3. The deficit in trade was also skyrocketing. America became the world's biggest borrower of money.
4. Reagan Renews the Cold War
 1. President Reagan called the Soviet Union the "Evil Empire" and took a firm stance against them. His way of dealing with the Soviets was through strength—meaning the military was to be built up.
 1. He gambled that by ramping up the arms race, the capitalistic U.S. economy could better afford this than the communist Soviet economy.
 2. Reagan proposed the **Strategic Defense Initiative** (SDI). More commonly called the "**Star Wars**" plan; SDI was to put satellites in orbit armed with lasers that could shoot down Soviet missiles.
 1. The theory sounded good. But there were questions: (1) how much would it cost? (A lot!), (2) would this actually work? (Scientists were skeptical), or (3) what if the Soviets just destroy our expensive satellite?

2. These questions were too much and SDI was never built.
3. In Poland, workers organized into a huge union in the **Solidarity** movement.
 1. The Soviets imposed martial law on Poland; the U.S. backed Poland by slapping economic sanctions on Russia.
4. Things move quickly between 1982 and '85 when three old Soviet leaders died in succession.
 1. 1982, Korean passenger airliner went to Soviet airspace and was shot down. Several of the dead were Americans.
 2. Clearly, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. were in old-fashioned Cold War standoff mode.
5. Troubles Abroad
 1. The Middle East kept up its turmoil when Israel invaded Lebanon to its north. Reagan sent U.S. troops to Lebanon in a peace-keeping attempt.
 1. A suicide bomber drove a truck into a Marine barracks, blew it up, and killed 200+ Marines. Afterward, Reagan pulled the U.S. troops out.
 2. Reagan's popularity kept on, earning him the nickname of the "Teflon president" because nothing stuck to him.
 2. In Nicaragua, leftist (communistic) "Sandinistas" had taken over the government.
 1. Whereas Carter had tried to extend a handshake to the Sandinistas, Reagan flatly opposed them. He said Nicaragua would be a base for Russia and accused the Sandinistas of stirring up communism in El Salvador.
 2. "Advisors" were sent to Nicaragua to support the "contras." The contras opposed the Sandinistas and were dubbed "freedom fighters."
 3. The CIA also secretly meddled in Nicaragua trying to overthrow the government.
 3. Reagan's military got involved in other places, notably the island of Grenada. There, communists had taken over so the U.S. military took over the island to supposedly protect the Americans who were on it.
6. Round Two for Reagan
 1. In 1984, Reagan ran for reelection. The Democrats nominated **Walter Mondale**. His V.P. candidate was **Geraldine Ferraro**—the first woman ever nominated by a major party.
 1. The economy was strong, Reagan was popular, and he won easily, 525 to only 13.
 2. Reagan's first term had featured budget and economic measures; his second term was marked by foreign issues.
 1. In the Soviet Union, a new leader took over in **Mikhail Gorbachev**.
 1. "Gorbie" was a different kind of Soviet leader—charismatic, personable, and outgoing.
 2. He spoke of "glasnost" or 'openness' by the Soviet government and of "perestroika" or "restructuring" the Soviet economy to be more free-market oriented.
 3. Gorbachev proposed cut intermediate range nuclear forces (INF) at a meeting with Reagan in Geneva.
 4. Talks at a second meeting in Iceland broke down. At their third meeting, the INF agreement was made. Reagan gave warm remarks about Gorbachev.
 2. Reagan supported **Corazon Aquino** in the Philippines when he booted out Dictator Ferinand Marcos.
 3. Reagan also ordered an air strike on Libya in return for its support of terrorism.
7. The Iran-Contra Imbroglia
 1. Reagan did have foreign-policy headaches.
 1. Some Americans had been captured by Muslim militant radicals in Lebanon.
 2. The communistic Sandinista government in Nicaragua was holding onto power. Reagan wanted to send military aid, but Congress wouldn't go along.
 2. More bad news came in a U.S.-Iran-Nicaragua scheme called the **Iran-Contra Affair**.
 1. **Lt. Col. Oliver North** had secretly arranged a deal where U.S. weapons would be sold to Iran, and then the money would go to the Contra "freedom fighters" in Nicaragua.
 2. This was a tricky deal and bold in that neither Congress nor the president approved it (or even knew about it).
 3. Hearings were held and Oliver North went to prison. Reagan was in lose-lose situation...
 1. If he *did* know of this scheme, it would appear he was circumventing Congress to aid the Contras.
 2. If he *didn't* know of it (which he didn't), it appeared he didn't know what was going on under his nose.
 3. True to the "Teflon president" nickname, Reagan came through the ordeal still very popular.
8. Reagan's Economic Legacy
 1. The traditional viewpoint of increasing government revenue was to increase taxes. Supply-side economists felt that thinking was backwards. They said *cutting* taxes would actually increase revenue (through growing the economy).
 1. The reality of the Reagan years was a "revenue hole" of \$200 billion per year, caused by the tax cuts and increased military spending.
 2. In his eight years, Reagan added almost \$2 trillion to the national debt—more than all of the previous presidents combined. (Bad as they were, even Reagan's high-debt numbers would seem small in later years).
 3. Much of the debt was to foreign nations, especially Japan. Paying it off in the future seemed, and seems, bleak.
 2. Reagan was successful in halting the "welfare-state" programs that had dominated the New Deal, the Fair Deal, and the Great Society. His goal of smaller government was achieved.
 3. Sorry trend between 1970 and 2000 emerged. The old cliché of "the rich got richer and the poor got poorer" was true.
 1. The **Reaganomics** idea of "trickle-down economics", helping the rich (who own business and grow the economy) would cause money trickle down to the working classes, seemed proven false by the statistics.
 2. Between 1970 and 2000, the poorest fifth of Americans got slightly poorer (from 5.4 to 4.3% of total income). The wealthiest fifth got fairly richer (40.9 to 47.7%). 3/5 in the middle class got fairly poorer (53.6 to 47.9%).
9. The Religious Right
 1. In the early 1980s, the political power of religious conservatives became apparent. They rose up in the "cultural wars" to attack the excesses of the 1960s and 70s.

2. **Rev. Jerry Falwell** started the **Moral Majority** and registered between 2 and 3 million voters.
 1. Falwell spoke against sexual permissiveness, abortion, feminism, and homosexuality.
 3. "Televangelists" used the media to convey their messages.
 1. They also used some of the old 60s techniques, such as "identify politics" and civil disobedience by blocking entrances to abortion clinics.
 4. Some of the leaders were plagued with scandal, but still, the "**New Right**" remained a powerful force in American politics.
10. Conservatism in the Courts
1. As prior presidents used Supreme Court to swing the liberal side, Reagan used it to swing back to the conservative side.
 1. He named a near-majority of the Court during his eight years.
 2. 3 justices were conservative-leaning. Notably, **Sandra Day O'Connor**, the first woman on the Supreme Court.
 2. The court dealt with affirmative action.
 1. In 1984, it ruled that a union's rules on job seniority outweighed affirmative action quotas.
 2. In *Ward's Cove Packing v. Arizona* and in *Martin v. Wilks*, the Court made it harder to prove a company practiced racial discrimination in hiring and easier for whites to prove *reverse* discrimination in hiring.
 3. The court ruled on abortion.
 1. *Roe v. Wade* had legalized abortion in 1973. Hot questions in the culture war rose up such as, "Is it legal to abort a baby the minute before a natural birth?", "The day or week or month before?", and "If it's not okay near the end of a pregnancy, why is it okay a bit earlier?" And others like, "Is it okay for a 14 year old to get pregnant, then walk into a clinic and get an abortion without the parents ever knowing? A 13 or 12 year old?" and "Should taxpayer money go toward those aborting those babies?"
 2. *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services* the Court supported Missouri law a place some restrictions on abortion.
 3. In *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the Court ruled that states could restrict access to an abortion if it did not place "undue burden" on the mother. In this case, a wife could *not* be forced to tell her husband of an abortion, a minor *could* be forced to tell her parents.
 4. These decisions threw gas on the fire for feminists and pro-abortion advocates. Bitter culture war battles would follow.
11. Referendum on Reaganism in 1988
1. In 1986, the Democrats won back the Senate and pushed back against Reagan.
 1. The Iran-Contra affair didn't help Reagan's image and the Democrats tried to seize on this.
 2. **Robert Bork** was rejected for nomination to the Supreme Court as being too conservative.
 2. The two deficits hurt: the annual budget deficit and the trade deficit.
 3. Dropping oil prices hurt the Southwest's economy, lowered real estate values, and badly hurt savings and loans (**S&Ls**).
 1. The S&L situation was so bad that the federal government had to enact a \$500 billion bailout.
 4. The stock market got wild with many mergers and buyouts.
 1. Jitters kicked in Oct. 19, 1987 & the market dropped 508 points—the largest one day drop in history up 'til then.
 5. The Democrats hoped to rally these events right into the White House in 1988.
 1. **Gary Hart**, early front-runner, dropped out after being caught with a mistress on his yacht, "Monkey Business."
 2. Black candidate **Jesse Jackson** put together what he called a "rainbow coalition."
 3. The Democratic nomination went to **Michael Dukakis**, the calm governor of Massachusetts.
 4. The Republicans nominated V.P. **George H. W. Bush**, essentially to keep the Reagan years going.
 5. Despite the not-so-good news of late, America was still doing well. Plus, Dukakis installed little if any excitement. Bush won handily, 426 to 112.
12. George H. W. Bush and the End of the Cold War
1. Bush came from a well-to-do family, the son of a senator. He grew up in Connecticut, attended Yale, served in WWII, and entered the oil business in Texas. He then entered public service: congressman, emissary to China, ambassador to the U.N., director of the C.I.A., and vice president. As president, he sought "a kinder, gentler America."
 2. Communism seemed at the breaking point early in Bush's administration.
 1. In China, hundreds of thousands of pro-democracy demonstrators met in Tiananmen Square in Beijing. They raised a 30 foot statue modeled after the Statue of Liberty.
 1. The Chinese leaders were not pleased and ordered the military into the Square to break up the protest. Hundreds were killed and the protest ended.
 2. In Europe, communism did fall.
 1. The Solidarity movement in led by ousting the communist government.
 2. Other communist nations quickly followed by booting the government out, including: Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Romania.
 3. Symbol of the Cold War was **Berlin Wall**. In December of 1989, the wall came down after 45 years.
 4. Even larger, the U.S.S.R. broke apart.
 1. Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* were opening things up within the Soviet Union.
 2. Soviet hardliners tried a military ouster of Gorbachev. Russian president **Boris Yeltsin** helped stop the *coup* attempt.
 3. Gorbachev later resigned in 1991 and the U.S.S.R. busted up into 15 independent republics. These were *loosely* united in what was called the "Commonwealth of Independent States." Gorbachev's legacy would be that he tore down the old communistic Soviet structure.
 5. The message seemed clear: the Cold War was over, the democracies had won and communism had lost. Bush spoke of a "new world order" where democratic republics would negotiate rather than fight.
 3. With 15 new nations, the new worry was what would happen to all of the old Soviet nuclear weapons.

1. Bush met with Yeltsin and worked out the **START II** treaty. It promised to reduce long-range nuclear weapons by 2/3 within 10 years.
 2. With all changes happening so fast, Europe would go through quite a bit of unrest—mostly ethnic and economic.
 4. Changes meant changes for the U.S. For the last 40 years, U.S. foreign policy had been rather simple—opposes U.S.S.R.
 1. With the Cold War over, military cuts were made. 34 military bases were closed, a \$52 billion order for navy attack planes was canceled, defense plants closed.
 5. Democracy spread to other parts of the world too.
 1. The racist South African system of "apartheid" ended. **Nelson Mandela** was released from prison after 27 years and was later elected South Africa's president.
 2. In Nicaragua, elections removed the communist Sandinistas. Peace also came to El Salvador after much fighting.
13. The Persian Gulf Crisis
1. The Middle East and oil were still troublesome. In August of 1990, **Saddam Hussein** invaded and took over Kuwait. He wanted Kuwait's oil fields and port to the Persian Gulf.
 1. Saddam was widely known as a ruthless thug and dictator who killed his own people if they opposed him.
 2. President Bush responded by going to the United Nations.
 1. The Security Council gave the okay to use force to remove Saddam if he didn't leave. January 15, 1991 was set as the deadline. Congress later gave their official approval.
 3. Bush amassed a huge military force. There were over 500,000 Americans joined by 270,000 from 28 other nations.
 4. The **Persian Gulf War** was short and effective.
 1. The attack started January 16 and moved fast. First, warplanes pounded the Iraqis. Saddam shot "Scud" missiles at the U.S. troops and at Israel. Many were shot down in flight by American "Patriot" missiles.
 2. The U.S. was led by **Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf** ("Stormin' Norman") feared the worst when Saddam spoke of waging the "mother of all battles."
 1. Saddam had stockpiled chemical and biological weapons, poison gas, and might spread anthrax.
 3. Next, ground troops moved in with tanks in what was called "**Operation Desert Storm**." Desert Storm moved fast and lasted only four days. Saddam had oil dumped into the Persian Gulf and set the oil fields on fire as he pulled back. Scores of Iraqi soldiers were more-than-willing to surrender.
 5. The generals wanted to go into Baghdad and take out Saddam then and there. But, Bush said the deal was to kick Saddam out of Kuwait, not to overrun Iraq.
 6. Saddam accepted a cease-fire on February 27. But, he was still in power—a fact that would come back to haunt the U.S.
14. Bush on the Home Front
1. The **Americans with Disabilities Act** (1990) banned discrimination of the disabled.
 2. A major water projects bill was signed to subsidize western waters.
 3. The culture wars continued.
 1. The Dept. of Education questioned whether college scholarships for minorities were legal.
 2. The threatened to veto a bill that would've made it easier for an employee to prove discrimination in hiring and promotion practices.
 3. Bush nominated African-American **Clarence Thomas** to the Supreme Court. Thomas appointed was opposed by the NAACP because Thomas was conservative and by NOW (National Org. for Women) because he's pro-life.
 1. Adding fuel to fire, a woman claimed Thomas sexually harassed her. It turned into a classic he-said she-said situation. Despite the sound and fury, Clarence Thomas' appointment was approved, 52-48.
 2. The nomination process did bring sexual harassment to the fore and raised tension over the topic.
 4. Worse for George H. W. Bush was the economy.
 1. During the 1988 campaign, Bush had made the promise, "Read my lips, no new taxes." When the economy slowed and revenue dropped, and with the annual deficit at \$250 billion, he had to eat those words.
 2. In 1990, Bush went along with a budget increase and a tax increase.
 3. Fair or not, like many other presidents the bad economy was blamed on Bush, and would cost him an election.